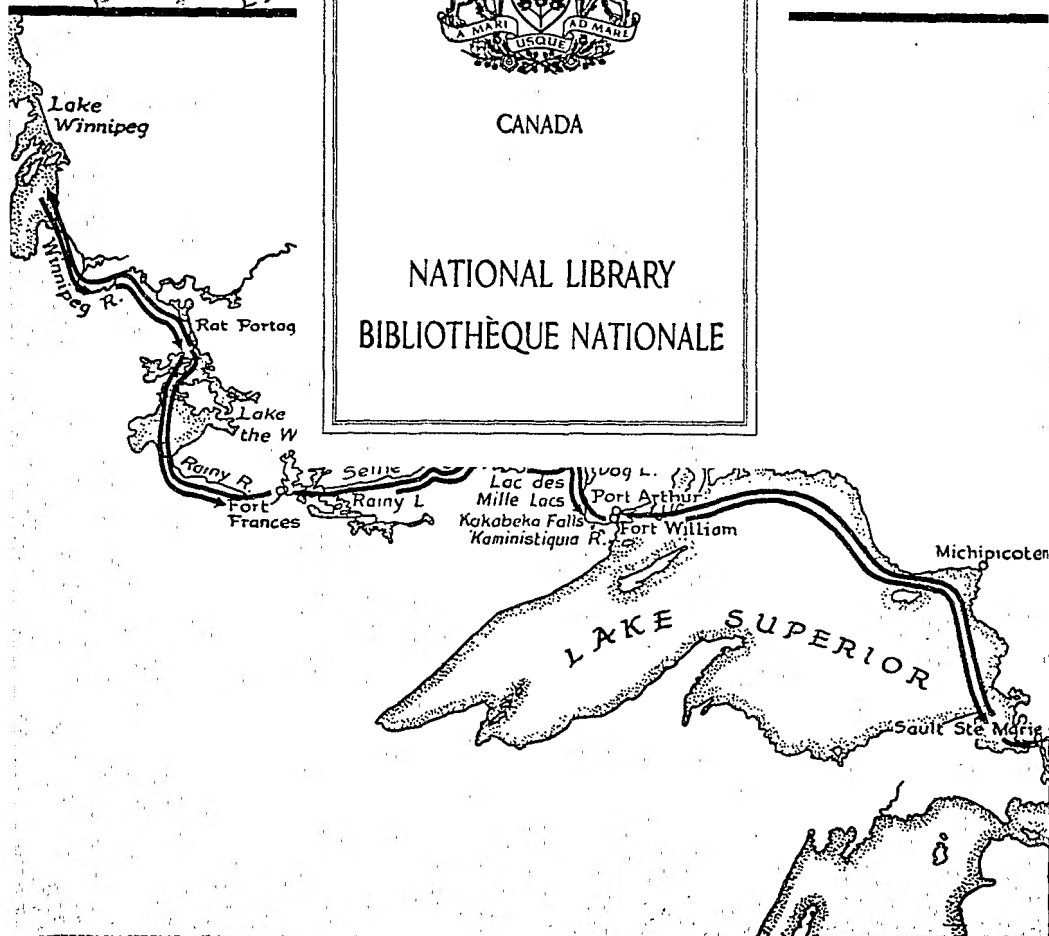
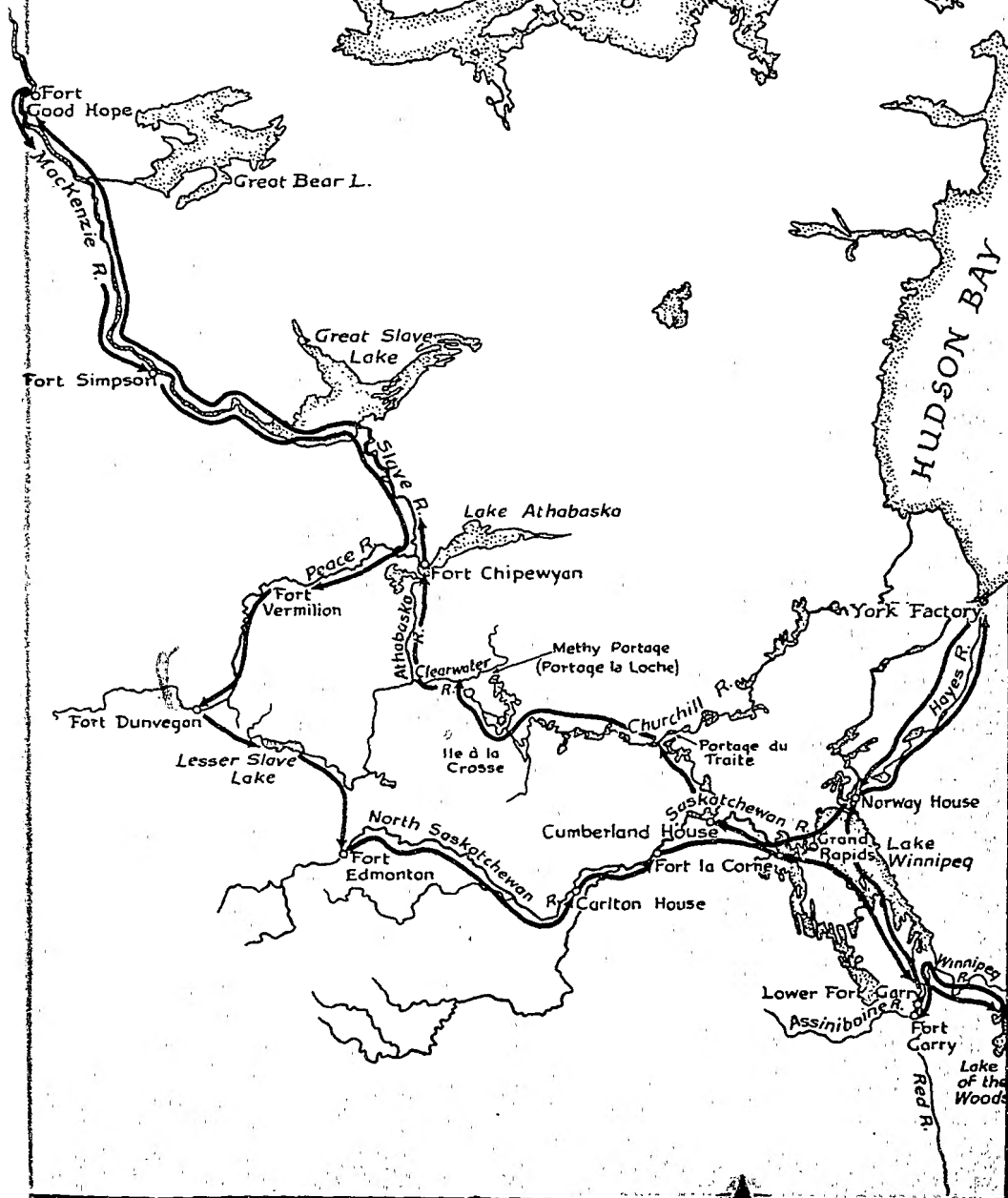


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# HENRY LEFROY'S JOURNEY FROM MONTREAL TO FORT GOOD HOPE 1843-1844





## IN SEARCH OF THE MAGNETIC NORTH



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### IN SEARCH OF THE MAGNETIC NORTH

A Soldier-Surveyor's Letters from the North-West, 1843-1844: Edited by GEORGE F. G. STANLEY, Royal Military College of Canada: with illustrations.





(Painted by George Berthon, 1853)

**CAPTAIN J. H. LEFROY, R.A.**  
Director of the Toronto Magnetic Observatory  
1841 - 1853

JOHN HENRY LEFROY

# IN SEARCH OF THE MAGNETIC NORTH

A Soldier-Surveyor's Letters from  
the North-West 1843-1844

EDITED BY GEORGE F. G. STANLEY



TORONTO  
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY OF CANADA LIMITED  
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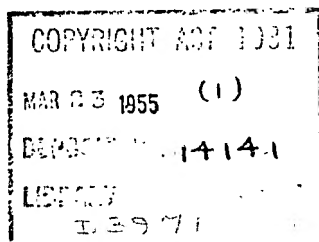


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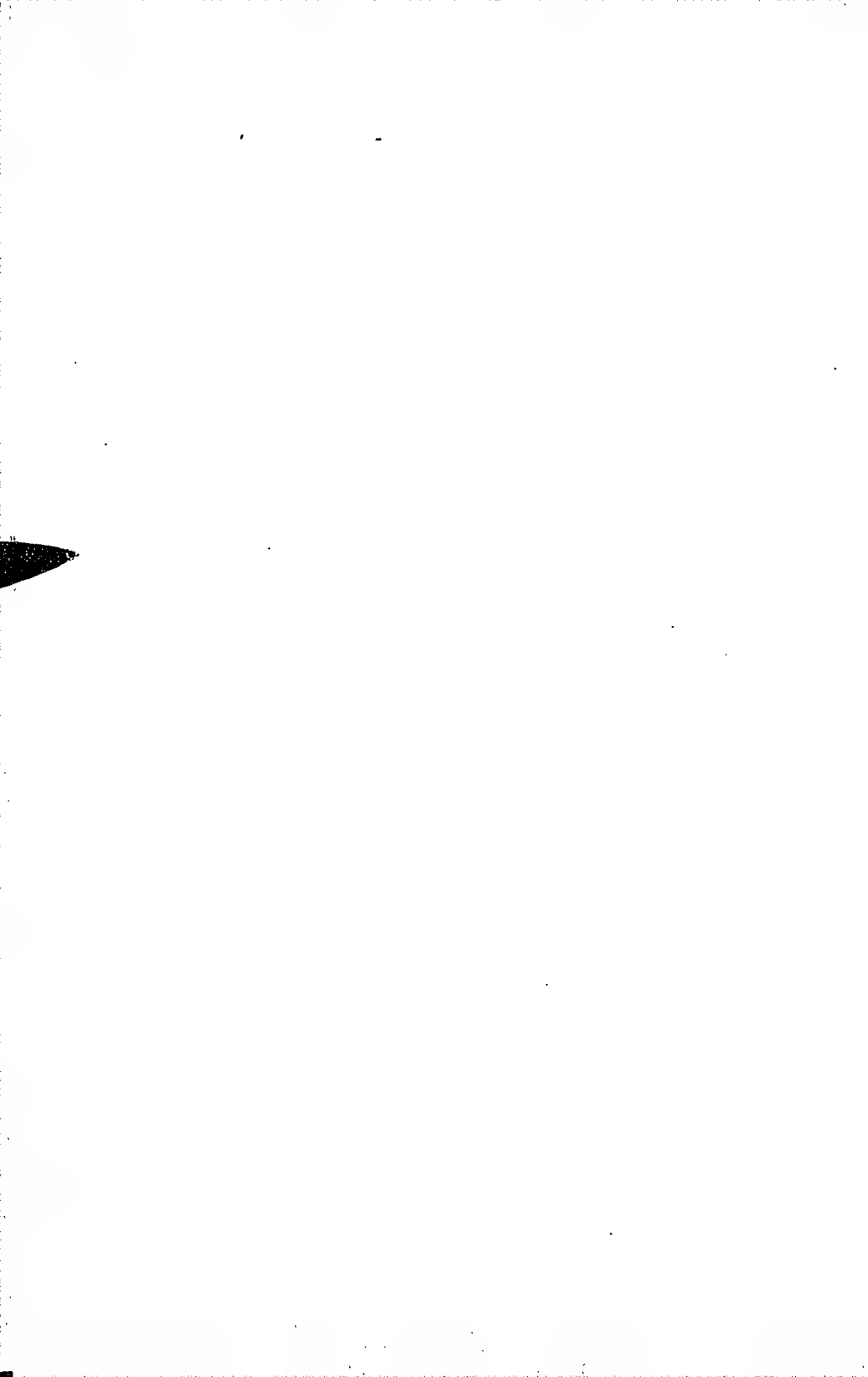


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TO  
MY MOTHER

*Della Catherine Stanley*





## PREFACE

The letters which form the subject of this little book were written between April, 1843, and February, 1845, by a young artillery subaltern, John Henry Lefroy, later Major-General Sir Henry Lefroy, during the period when he was employed in carrying out magnetic observations in the little known regions of the Hudson's Bay Company Territories. Lefroy was a meticulous scientist and kept an accurate account of his observations which were subsequently published. Unfortunately three manuscript volumes of his daily journals were lost in 1846. The letters printed below provide in narrative form the only record of Lefroy's travels in North-West Canada. In 1895 Sir Henry's widow published an autobiography written by her husband. This book is, however, extremely rare; it was printed "for private circulation only", and gives only a few excerpts from the entertaining letters which he wrote during his famous journey to the North-West.

The existence of these letters, then in the possession of Sir Henry's grandson, Commander Philip D. Crofton, of North Fitzwarren (Taunton), England, was drawn to my attention in 1943 while I was serving with the Historical Section of the Canadian Army by Captain R. M. Taylor, R.C.A.M.C., of Toronto. I visited Commander Crofton, who, feeling that his grandfather's letters were of particular Canadian interest, decided to give them to Canada. The letters were then turned over to me for safe-keeping. On my return from overseas in the summer of 1945 I gave



them to the Federal Archivist, Dr. Gustave Lanctot. Notice of the acquisition of these letters appeared in the annual *Report of the Department of Public Archives for 1945*.

The Lefroy letters are filled with interesting comments about persons and places. Since the printed documentary materials about the history of the North-West are all too slight and Lefroy's contribution is almost entirely unknown to Canadians, the reproduction of these letters would seem to justify the effort of transcribing and editing them.

To Captain C. C. J. Bond of the Historical Section of the General Staff, I am much indebted for the map of Lefroy's journey which accompanies this book. I also express my gratitude to Mr. Andrew Thomson, Controller of the Meteorological Service of Canada, for making available the frontispiece illustration of Lefroy, and to Dr. R. M. Taylor for lending me a copy of the Lefroy *Autobiography*.

GEORGE F. G. STANLEY

The Royal Military College,  
Kingston, Canada.

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## INTRODUCTION

### I

John Henry Lefroy was a soldier-scientist. As such, he was, in some ways, a type of man more likely found in a modern army than in one of an earlier era; he was, nevertheless, the product of his generation and environment, Victorian England, the Anglican Church and the British Army. He was thoroughly the English gentleman, with an English gentleman's sincere belief in the inevitable superiority of things English. Physically he was tall, with sharply cut features, slim and alert. In our own generation he would undoubtedly have appeared stiff and formal; but that was part of the personal equipment of every officer and gentleman in his day. Underneath his surface coat of starched dignity he was genial, cheerful, and kind of heart, without pettiness or vanity. He loved his Church; and his interest in missionary work never diminished throughout a career which lasted seventy-eight years. He always took a kindly interest in the soldiers with whom he came in contact; but like the English gentleman he was, his interest and his good works were never ostentatious; they were like himself, unobtrusive, unpretending, sincere.

Lefroy was the son of a Church of England clergyman. He was born in the village of Ashe, Hampshire, England, on January 28th, 1817. When his father, the local rector, died several years later, Mrs. Lefroy and the family moved to Itchel (later Ewshott) Manor, a large house near



Farnham which had been left to her husband some time previously. John Henry was sent to private schools at Alton and Richmond, and in January, 1831, he was entered as an officer cadet in the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. Four years later, December, 1834, he was gazetted second lieutenant at the Royal Artillery.\* For the next few years he was stationed at Woolwich, with short periods of duty at Purfleet and the Tower of London. During these years his essentially religious nature found an outlet in weekly meetings with some of his brother officers for bible reading and prayer, and in conducting Sunday School classes for soldiers' children. Finally, in 1837, Lefroy was promoted lieutenant and was posted to Chatham.

It was at Chatham that Lieutenant Lefroy developed those scientific aptitudes which were to mark him as an officer almost in advance of his time. He availed himself of the facilities of the Royal Engineers School of Instruction and began to study practical astronomy. In 1838, Lefroy and a brother officer, Lieutenant Eardley Wilmot, submitted through official channels the suggestion that an institution be formed which might afford career officers greater opportunities for professional instruction. The idea had apparently been prompted by the reading of the manuscript records of a defunct regimental society. The suggestion of the young subalterns did not suffer the usual fate of ideas emanating from junior officers in the Army. It was taken up by Colonel Cockburn, head of the Royal

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\* In his *Autobiography* he wrote: "It was my ambition to obtain the Engineers, and I should probably have done so, but for a black eye with which I went up to the examination, and for which decoration I had to thank Chapman, now Colonel Chapman of the Engineers—a very distinguished officer. A nefarious attempt of his to rob my table of a very crusty loaf had led to an exchange of blows: he being the aggressor was kept back one term. I was sentenced to the Artillery, then, and long afterwards, a sort of penal corps in the eyes of the authorities." (p. 13)

Laboratory at Woolwich, and with official sanction, the Royal Artillery Institution was established with Cockburn as president and Lefroy as secretary.

Meanwhile the problems of terrestrial magnetism were seizing the imagination of scientists all over the world. Frenchmen, Russians, Germans and Italians enjoyed the advantages of State-supported institutions for the purpose of conducting research into the phenomena of the earth's magnetism; but in Great Britain scientific investigations of this nature were left to the sporadic efforts inspired by individual interest and enthusiasm. However, in 1836, the great German scientist, Alexander von Humboldt, put forward to the president of the Royal Society a proposal which he had already discussed with two English scientists, Edward Sabine and Humphrey Lloyd. Von Humboldt strongly urged the establishment throughout the British Empire of a series of magnetic stations similar to those which had already been established elsewhere. Great Britain, he maintained, by virtue of her "extensive dominions in all parts of the globe" possessed "unrivalled means of contributing to the advancement of the physical sciences, by the formation of suitable establishments in the localities in which researches might best be carried on". Von Humboldt's challenge was met in part in 1837 when a university observatory was established at Dublin and when a site for a magnetic observatory was set aside at Greenwich by the British Government. The matter was not allowed to rest here. The Royal Society gave its mature consideration to Baron von Humboldt's recommendations and, together with the British Association for the Advancement of Science, the Royal Society officially approached the British Government with the request that a series of magnetic observatories be established at stations in both



the western and eastern hemispheres. In the spring of 1839 the Government agreed to go ahead with the scheme. The sites selected included Toronto, St. Helena, Cape of Good Hope, and Van Dieman's Land, and others to be chosen by the East India Company in the territories under their control. Sabine was appointed superintendent of all the stations, and specially selected officers were sent to Dublin to receive instruction in the use of scientific instruments from Professor Humphrey Lloyd of Trinity College. Among them was Lieutenant John Henry Lefroy, R.A.

After several months in Dublin, where he established a lifelong friendship with Professor Lloyd, Lefroy set out with Lieutenant Wilmot on H.M.S. *Terror* on September 25th. His destination was the island of exile on which Napoleon Bonaparte had spent his last years. The voyage was a lengthy one, for the survey work upon which the vessel was employed required it to take a long and devious course by way of the Canaries, Cape Verde Island and Trinidad, before depositing Lieutenant Lefroy at St. Helena. He remained here until 1842 carrying out his magnetic observations. During this period he witnessed the exhumation of the great Napoleon and the transfer of the body to its final resting-place in Les Invalides in Paris. Then, in July, 1842, he was sent to take charge of the Observatory which had recently been opened in Toronto, Canada West.

## II

It had been the original intention of the British authorities that the Canadian observatory should be located in Montreal. When, on September 1st, 1839, Lieutenant (later Major-General) Charles J. B. Riddell, R. A., was

sent to take charge of the scientific operations in British North America, it was to Montreal that he and his assistants sailed. Riddell immediately set about to find a suitable location and on October 2nd he wrote telling the Commanding Royal Engineer in Montreal that St. Helen's Island appeared to offer the best possibilities and asking that steps might be taken to erect the necessary buildings. The plans had been prepared in advance, in Dublin, by Professor Lloyd. They called for stone work no less than two feet thick, with the inner walls covered with plaster and double windows "in order to keep a uniform temperature and if possible to obviate the necessity of warming the room containing the magnetic instruments." It seems hardly likely that Lloyd appreciated the full intensity of the Canadian winter if he proposed to combat the cold merely with stone walls and double windows.

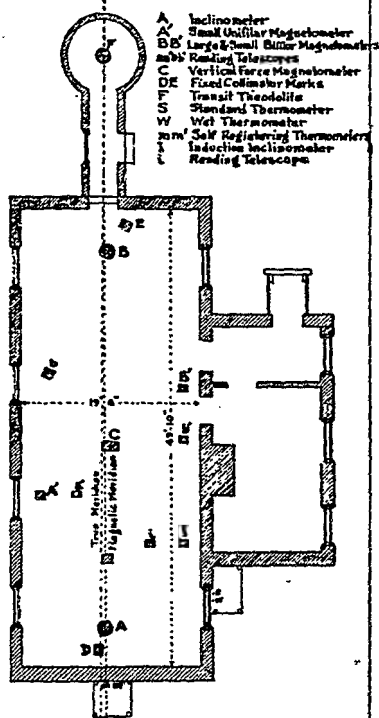
But St. Helen's Island did not prove to be a satisfactory location. From a Royal Naval officer, Captain Bayfield, who was in charge of the Surveying Schooner *Gulnare*, Riddell learned that the rock formations about Montreal and the whole of the St. Lawrence valley generally were quite unsuitable for the purposes which the scientists had in mind. It was Bayfield who suggested that, in his opinion, Toronto would be a far better choice. Accordingly, work was suspended on the Montreal Observatory, and to Toronto Riddell, with his three non-commissioned officers and two gunners, hastened without further delay.

In Toronto the only military land available was to be found in the vicinity of the old Fort (Fort York). And here the first magnetic observations in Canada West were made. But this site too had its drawbacks. Not only was the temporary observatory located on "part of the drill ground of the troops, where during the summer months

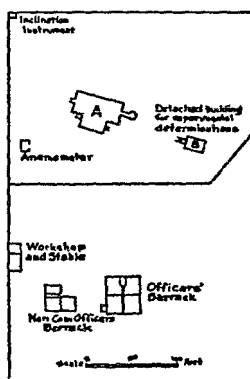
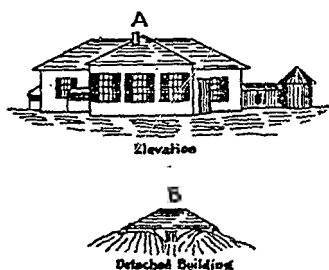
there would be frequent firing both of artillery and musquetry" but, according to Riddell, the "swamps in the neighbourhood were worse than I had at first imagined and likely to be very unhealthy". Finally, in December, 1839, Riddell wrote to "the Bursar of Upper Canada College" pointing out that "one of the most eligible situations for the observatory . . . would be on the property of the College to the west of the site laid down by the university". He urged the college authorities to grant him a small parcel of land on which might be constructed "a magnetic and meteorological observatory and buildings for the accommodation of the superintending officer and his assistants, with a right of road way thereto". Still concerned very much with his health, Riddell pointed out in another letter, as his clinching argument, the fact that "the college ground possesses the advantage of being dry and healthy, where the Military Reserve will probably remain for some time longer little better than a swamp". His arguments were, apparently, convincing. Early in February, 1840, the President and Council of King's College deeded two and four-tenths acres to the Crown "for the purpose of erecting thereon an observatory and other buildings connected therewith on condition that when no longer occupied for scientific purposes the title shall revert to the University of King's College together with all buildings erected thereon". There was a proviso, however, that should the British Government ever wish to "resume the possession and occupancy thereof if again required for scientific purposes", the site would revert to the Crown.

At once work began on the observatory. The main building was of frame construction, fifty feet in length. It consisted of one large and several small rooms. There

## Magnetical Observatory at Toronto

Plan of the Toronto Observatory  
showing the disposition of the instruments

Ground Plan of the Observatory Enclosure

Elevation of the Toronto Observatory  
and of  
The Auxiliary Building

Plan of the Magnetical Observatory at Toronto, 1840-1854, from drawings by Lieut. Younghusband, R.A., as reproduced in E. Sabine, *Observations made at the Magnetical and Meteorological Observatory at Toronto*—Vol. I, p. 18, 1845.

were several detached buildings for experimental purposes as well as a cottage for the officer in charge\* and barrack accommodation for the non-commissioned officers. The whole was enclosed within a picket fence. No iron was used in the construction of any of the buildings in order that the magnetic instruments should be as free as possible from all metallic interference. Copper nails were therefore used where wooden pegs were not practicable. According to contemporary authorities, the Toronto Observatory was probably the most complete establishment of its kind in the world as far as instrumental equipment was concerned. Certainly the annual charge at Toronto greatly exceeded that at any of the other British scientific stations established at the same time. On more than one occasion the financially harassed Director was obliged to borrow money at the end of the fiscal year in order to carry on his work until funds arrived from London.

The Toronto Observatory was administered by the military authorities until 1853. In that year it was turned over to the Provincial Government. Almost immediately work was started on a new stone structure under the superintendence of the architects of University College. The new buildings were completed in 1858 and the old frame observatory was torn down. The first civilian Director was Professor J. B. Cherriman, who continued in that appointment until 1855 when he was succeeded by another University of Toronto Professor, G. T. Kingston. Subsequent directors have included C. Carpmael (1880-1894) and Sir Frederic Stupart (1894-1929).

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\* "The cottage was of very slight construction and difficult to warm. I have often seen the water on the wash-handstand in our bedroom frozen solid; that in the water-bottles, having an open neck to expand into, would sometimes overflow in ice round the neck without bursting them." (*Autobiography*, p. 113)

## III

When the Observatory was first established in Toronto plans were already in hand to send an officer to the far northern territories of the Hudson's Bay Company to carry out a magnetic survey in that part of British North America. Edward Sabine had discussed the possibility of such an expedition with the Chairman of the Committee of Physics of the Royal Society and had asked him to take it up with the Society. The cost, he maintained, would be reasonably modest, since the Company was "ready to furnish gratuitous canoe conveyance in the territories belonging to them". Sir John Herschel approved Sabine's proposal and on January 10th, 1841, the Marquis of Northampton, the President of the Royal Society, wrote accordingly to the Treasury. Their Lordships agreed to meet the cost of the expedition which Sabine had estimated at £910, on the understanding that free transportation would be provided by the Hudson's Bay Company.

The original proposals did not work out exactly as planned. The officer whom Sabine had in mind for the expedition was Lieutenant (later Lieutenant-General) C. Younghusband. He was to have been appointed as assistant to Lieutenant Charles Riddell for a period of three years, during which time he was to make two or three summer trips into the Company's territories. But Riddell had never enjoyed good health since his arrival in Canada in 1839. He suffered dreadfully from chronic dysentery and early in 1841 was invalided to England. Younghusband was therefore placed in temporary charge of the Toronto Observatory. At that point the permanent appointment, with the magnetic survey attached, was offered to Lieutenant John Henry Lefroy in St. Helena. Leaving the island



in February, 1842, Lefroy returned to England, where he received further instruction in the use of magnetic equipment, and then set sail for Canada on July 20th. After an uneventful voyage of forty-two days he reached Quebec and hurried to Toronto.

It was April, 1843, when Lefroy set out on his famous journey to the North-West. With him went Bombardier William Henry of the Royal Artillery. Equipped with a small tent which he shared with Henry, a chest bearing his books and clothes, a canteen and provision basket, and ten boxes of instruments, he journeyed by stage coach to Lachine\* where he joined one of the fur brigades of the Hudson's Bay Company. This brigade was under the command of Chief Trader John McLean. McLean apparently thought highly of his companion for he wrote later in his *Notes of a Twenty-Five Years' Service in the Hudson's Bay Territory* that Lefroy "seems equal to all the hardships and privations of a voyageur's life" and described him as "the ablest mangeur de lard we have had in the country for a number of years". The starting day was May 1st. In the *canots de maître*, manned by some fifty voyageurs and Indians in brightly coloured shirts and red caps, they paddled up the Ottawa River, thence to Lake Nipissing and by way of French River to Lake Huron. It was the old familiar water trail which had echoed the swish of paddles of Canadian fur-traders ever since the days of Samuel de Champlain. Through the Great Lakes, past Sault Ste. Marie, they went, hugging the shore-line until they reached Fort William, the head of the lakes,

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\* "It was before navigation was open, and I had to travel in a common open country waggon, filled with straw, in a sharp frost. The effects of the jolting upon my instruments were disastrous. Screws worked loose, or came out altogether; some of them were nearly shaken to pieces." (*Autobiography*, p. 64)

then enjoying but a shadow of the glory of the days of Simon McTavish and the North West Company. Lefroy was struck by the magnificent scenery and the clear icy transparency of the Canadian waters. To him the beautiful Falls of Kakabeka at the Portage Ecarté were second only to the torrent of Niagara. Then following the Rainy River, Rainy Lake, Lake of the Woods, Winnipeg River system, an intricate channel through miles of virgin forest land, he and his companions paddled and portaged until they reached Lake Winnipeg. It was no easy task. Lefroy had to do his own share of the daily labours, and his portage load of gun, barometer, dish, haversack with books and axe was a tolerable burden, even for a *bourgeois*. On June 28th he landed at Lower Fort Garry. Here he was greeted by Sir George Simpson, the Governor of Rupert's Land, who with that speed for which he was famous, had passed Lefroy and McLean along the Ottawa on May 5th. From Fort Garry Lefroy went to Norway House which served as the base station for all his more northerly observations. Here he equipped himself for the coming winter with a warm *capote* of thick white duffle trimmed with red and with a blue hood. Bombardier Henry's coat was less striking, a modest grey was his choice!

Continuing his journey Lefroy visited York Factory, and then travelling along the Saskatchewan River past The Pas and Cumberland House, he crossed the Methy Portage to the Clearwater. It was as significant as crossing the Equator; henceforth he and Henry might call themselves *voyageurs*; no longer were they still novices in northern travel, mere *mangeurs de lard*. Following the silver waters of the Clearwater and the Athabaska they reached Fort Chipewyan on Lake Athabaska on September



23rd. Already the nights were clear and frosty. The nip of winter was in the air.

At Fort Chipewyan Lefroy and Henry set up instruments and from October 16th, 1843, to February 29th, 1844, magnetic and meteorological observations were made every hour throughout the short periods of daylight and long Arctic darkness. At times of special magnetic disturbance they took their observations every two minutes. And this at times when the temperature inside the little log observatory was below zero and outside the mercury was freezing. The difficulties experienced by Lefroy scarcely emerge from Sabine's report to the Royal Society; although the English mathematician Edward Riddle was sufficiently impressed to write to Lefroy's mother: "Your son has done wonders in the way of observing, having kept up hourly observations for about six months, with only one assistant — a quantity no one could in the least have looked for, but which will be well worth the labour now it is done."

On March 5th, Lefroy packed up his instruments and set out by dog-team for Fort Simpson which he reached on the 26th, having averaged about twenty-four miles per day. Here he was greeted by his friend and travelling companion, John McLean, who had taken over the post from Chief Factor John Lewes. At Fort Simpson Lefroy again carried out hourly observations as assiduously as he had done at Fort Chipewyan.

After visits to Fort Good Hope and Fort Norman on the Mackenzie, Lefroy returned by way of Great Slave Lake and the Slave River to Fort Chipewyan on June 30th. Here he took more observations and then, on July 4th, he set out up the Peace River with the object of travelling by water as far as Fort Dunvegan and then crossing the

plains to Edmonton. This part of the journey was without incident and on August 19th Lefroy bade farewell to John Rowand, the Chief Factor at Edmonton. Rowand had suggested to Lefroy that he might stretch his journey to include the country of the South Saskatchewan, offering him safe conduct through the Blackfoot country; but Lefroy was anxious to get back to Canada before the close of the navigation season and so he and Henry embarked in a small barge provided by Rowand and set off down the Saskatchewan River. On August 21st he reached Fort Pitt and, on the 25th, Carlton House. Rumours of Indian troubles added spice to the navigation of the river; but by October 10th Lefroy was back in Fort William. Progress along the north shore of Lake Superior was very slow. The weather was turning cold and the waters were choppy; it was not until November 14th that Lefroy reached the little military post at Penetanguishene. By this time winter had set in and although the ice had not yet formed on the lake, smaller bodies of water were often frozen and every drop splashed by the paddles froze where it fell.

The return to Toronto, where he arrived about 8 p.m. on November 18th, was a noisy one. The Iroquois Indian and the two half-breeds who accompanied him were in a state of exhilaration and intoxication, bellowing their paddling songs at the tops of their voices as they were accustomed to do on arrival at the trading-posts in the western territories. It was a little too much for Lefroy and for the staid inhabitants of Toronto; and Lefroy was greatly relieved when Peter Dease, a former Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, who was on his way to Montreal, offered to take them along with him. A few days later Lefroy too went on to Montreal to report himself



to the military authorities. When he returned again to Toronto on the 5th of December he took over from Younghusband his new responsibility as officer in charge of the Toronto Observatory.

During the eighteen months which he spent in the North-West the young artillery subaltern, John Henry Lefroy, had travelled close upon 6,000 miles; he had set up his instruments and taken his magnetic observations at hundreds of localities, all of them under great difficulty. But his work was typical of the man, careful, meticulous, accurate. It was a feat of physical endurance and scientific application of which too little is remembered. Edward Sabine made known to the Fellows of the Royal Society the broad lines of Lefroy's research, and Lefroy's measurements remained for many years the authority for the proximate position of the magnetic pole in North America as well as the yardstick by which scientific work of this nature might be measured. Professor Lloyd, Lefroy's old tutor, wrote in 1874 that Lefroy's work was "probably the most remarkable contribution to our knowledge of magnetic disturbance we possess". Despite the scientific significance of his research it was not until he was sixty-six years of age that Lefroy published in book form the results of his efforts in Northern Canada forty years before. The book was entitled *Diary of a Magnetic Survey of a Portion of the Dominion of Canada Chiefly in the North Western Territories Executed in the Years 1842-1844*. But this *Diary* was strictly scientific in character: for the warm and vivid details of his journey from Toronto to Fort Simpson we must rely upon the private letters which he wrote to his friends and relatives and which they so carefully preserved.

## IV

Captain Lefroy — he received his promotion in November, 1845 — remained in Toronto for another nine years in charge of the Toronto Observatory. Younghusband had returned to England and Lefroy's assistants included four N.C.O.s of the Royal Artillery including, in the last years of his stay, Sergeant James Walker, Corporal Thomas Menzies and Bombardiers Charles Jones and James Liley. Observations were made every second hour of the day and night of the force of the magnetic attraction of the earth and the direction in which it was exerted; observations were also made of the direction and velocity of the wind, of the barometric and thermometric readings and of all atmospheric phenomena.

But it was not all work and no play for Lefroy. He liked company, particularly the company of educated and well-bred men and women. He was a frequent visitor in the houses of the well-to-do in Toronto — was he not a young and eligible bachelor? — but of all of them it was "the brightness of Beverley House" which appealed to him most. He might write in complimentary terms of the charm and beauty of Lady Robinson, the wife of Sir John Beverley Robinson, but his eyes were really upon Sir John's daughter, Emily;\* and it was to Emily that he gave his heart and name on April 16th, 1846.

Several years later, in 1849, Lefroy's interest in intellectual activity took a form already familiar to him. In that

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\* "The hospitable doors of Beverley House (Chief Justice Robinson's) were not long in opening to me. I well remember my first dinner there—the lovely eldest daughter of the house, then in her twenty-second year, whom I took down, where we sat, and what we talked about. The family had not long returned from England; we had plenty to say. I thought her, as indeed she was, the most beautiful girl, with perhaps two exceptions, who had ever met my eyes . . ." (*Autobiography*, p. 63)

year he was responsible for organizing the Canadian Institute in Toronto. He became president and remained in charge of the Institute until he was recalled to England in 1853. On April 5th of that year the *Globe* gave an account of the annual conversazione of the Institute. A portrait of Captain Lefroy, painted by George Berthon, who had already established for himself a fine reputation as a portrait painter with his painting of the three daughters of Sir John Beverley Robinson, was presented to the Institute. A silver cup was given to Lefroy by Professor Cherriman of Toronto University who, incidentally, was to take over the directorship of the Observatory. To Lefroy it was all very moving; and his efforts to reply were, as the newspaper reporter observed, "broken by emotion which he was not able to repress".

On his return to England Lefroy was posted to Woolwich. He found that the Royal Artillery Institution had gone into decline; whereupon he did what he could to instil life into it and revive enthusiasm for it by once more becoming its secretary. But the war clouds were gathering on the horizon and in 1854 Lefroy was employed in compiling a *Handbook of Field Artillery for the use of Officers* which remained the official British text-book for thirty years. In the same year he was appointed technical assistant to the Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State for War, and was gazetted as "scientific adviser on subjects of artillery and inventions". It was largely his efforts which led to the replacement of the aged members of the "Select Committee" which advised the Master General of the Ordnance on technical matters (the youngest of them was 64 years of age), with young, active and enthusiastic officers free from most of the prejudices of

experience. Lefroy did not serve in Crimea. But he did see what field conditions were like when he was sent in 1855, as a result of the excitement stirred up by Florence Nightingale, to look into the conditions of the hospitals and the accommodation for the sick at Scutari.

When the war came to an end and plans were made for the reorganization of the system of military education it was to Lefroy, now Lieutenant-Colonel Lefroy, that the Secretary of State for War naturally turned. He it was who prepared the scheme which saw the organization of the Staff College at Sandhurst, and he it was who was appointed Inspector-General of Army Schools, in February, 1857. During 1857 he gave evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the administration of the Hudson's Bay Company's territories. In the following year he urged the establishment of a school of gunnery; and the organization of the school at Shoeburyness was the direct result.

Advancement in the military profession now came quickly. In 1858 Lefroy became a brevet-colonel; in 1864 he was appointed brigadier-general. Two years later, in 1866, he was appointed Director-General of Ordnance with the rank of Major-General. But differences of opinion between himself and the authorities put an end to further promotion. In April, 1870, Lefroy, who, a few weeks earlier had been made a C.B., resigned his military appointments and became a civilian. He was not long without employment. In March, 1871, he was appointed Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Bermudas. His duties were not onerous and he found ample time to devote himself to collecting and publishing a number of documents relating to the early history of the islands. He also returned to his old love and made a number of magnetic and



meteorological observations during his period as Governor of Bermuda. In 1877 he returned to England to receive a knighthood. Three years later he was appointed Governor of Tasmania. This had been the site of one of the early magnetic observatories and while in Tasmania Sir Henry resumed his magnetic studies and prepared a paper for the Royal Society on the problems of terrestrial magnetism at Hobart. In 1882 he went back to England where he busied himself with the publication of his Canadian *Diary*. A severe illness in the spring of 1885 compelled him to leave London and seek rest in a milder climate. He recovered to a certain extent, enough in any event to complete the autobiography which he had commenced in 1858; but he never regained his health and on April 11th, 1890, he died at Lewarne near Liskeard in the county of Cornwall. His Canadian wife, Emily Robinson, had predeceased him by thirty-one years. She had died in 1859 and had been buried in Crondall Churchyard not far distant from Ewshott House where her husband had lived and played as a little boy. Sir Henry's second wife, Charlotte, the widowed daughter of Colonel Thomas Dundas, whom he married in 1860, edited and published her husband's autobiography in 1895.

# IN SEARCH OF THE MAGNETIC NORTH



Letters from the North West, of personal  
and domestic interest 1843-44

Owing to the loss of my Journals in 1846  
these letters are <sup>the</sup> only record of my  
travels, in a narrative form

To be preserved

(This note was written by Sir Henry Lefroy on the  
envelope in which the original letters were pre-  
served. It is reproduced in the original handwriting.)

## I. FROM TORONTO TO LACHINE

(A)

Montreal, 25 April 1843

My dear Mother,

I have my head and my hands so full that I scarcely know what to do first. As for answering all the letters I have just received it is not possible, but many thanks for each and all, above all to Fanny<sup>1</sup> for her beautiful bellpull. It is so pretty that I begrudge leaving it at Toronto, however mean to send it there, in the belief that it is too long for our humble scale of cottage, Fanny was thinking of Longwood<sup>2</sup> when she made it, and that Younghusband wont be able to put it up. I have strictly forbidden him to cut it. It will serve my prospective drawing room when I return and take me a wife, and will be en suite with the stair carpet Lady Frazer is engaged to work for the same occasion. Many thanks too for a most liberal share of wedding cake. I had virtue enough to keep it about three weeks, until I could give a grand dinner party, when we drank Fanny's health, and voted the cake superlative.

I left Toronto on the 13 April and got here on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup>. Sir Geo. Simpson<sup>3</sup> arrived the same day, but I only

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. George Rickards, Lefroy's sister, of Cavendish Square, London.

<sup>2</sup> Napoleon's house in St. Helena where Lefroy had been stationed prior to coming to Toronto.

<sup>3</sup> Sir George Simpson (1787-1860), Governor-in-Chief of Rupert's Land.



got my parcels on Monday night. Sir George has been giving me much information and advice, but without making much alteration in the plans I have already described, up to the close of the present summer; beyond that they will be determined by circumstances. It is my intention however to winter in the north, D.V. because I cannot (in the given time) creditably discharge my trust without doing so. Do not derive your ideas of wintering from the accounts of Franklyn and Back.<sup>4</sup> My objects will expose me much less than theirs did them, will allow of more comforts, and besides, within the last few years, since the termination of the rivalry between the North West and the H Bay Companies, the whole standard of comfort in those regions has been much raised. From all I can learn I shall have the following opportunities of writing to you. Up to end of May by regular channels, but somewhat longer than usual in reaching you. Early in June from L. Winnipeg which you will not receive until about September. The end of June, from York Factory, which will be forwarded by the vessel returning in August or Sept<sup>r</sup> and which you will receive before Xmas. After that you must not be surprized or uneasy if you do not hear again for nearly a twelvemonth because there may be no canoes returning to the Southward until the next Spring.

Nothing can be more complete than the authorities with which I am furnished. I have a circular to all the Company's officers in charge of Posts directing them to afford me every assistance. "Should Mr L— require the assistance of any of the Company's servants for the

<sup>4</sup> Sir John Franklin (1786-1847) and Sir George Back (1796-1878) carried out explorations in the Canadian Arctic 1819-22, 1825-1827, and again in the case of Back, 1833-35.

purpose of conveying him from post to post, or on any other duty connected with his mission they are to be placed at his disposal, with such craft and appointments as may be necessary, and his demands for clothing and any other supplies may be complied with . . . It is to be understood that Mr. L— is to be at liberty to proceed to any part of the country he may desire, and to make such stay at the different posts as he may determine upon etc—". All this will show you that I have all the advantages both for taking care of myself, and for succeeding in my objects, that can be wished. And if it please God to permit me to attain those objects, and reap the fruit of my labour, I shall be richly rewarded for any exertions or inconveniences they may cost me. Do you, my dear Mother, and all the family, leave the issue with Him, and be thankful as I am that His Providence has called me to a work so far above my pretensions and deserts. I commit myself to His merciful keeping, and trust and believe that your prayers and mine will be heard for my preservation in Soul and body, and for an happy meeting when all is accomplished — three or four years are but a short time to give to a work of a matter so solid and lasting. I take very little personal equipment, it can be better got at their posts — a few red flannel shirts etc — none of the common sort — a change of clothes, a few books, Gun and fishing tackle, and a most excellent equipment of Instruments, amounting to a dozen, for various uses. They tell me they live like fighting cocks, carrying kegs of wine, kegs of butter, and good things quite beyond my calculations. Old Keith,<sup>5</sup> the principal

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<sup>5</sup> James Keith (d. 1851), a former Nor'Wester who, prior to his retirement from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1845, was in charge of the Montreal department of the Hudson's Bay Company with headquarters at Lachine.



factor (next to Sir Geo Simpson) was quite affronted when I expressed surprize at seeing table cloths provided. You will be glad to hear that I have a companion as far as Lake Superior, a Capt<sup>n</sup> Stacke of the 71<sup>st</sup>, of whom I knew nothing previously; he appears a very good natured pleasant person, young, an Irishman, and a great sportsman. If I pass the winter in the North, and start again in the Spring of 1844 I shall not reappear in civilized life until October 1844 when I expect Col. Sabine to meet me at Toronto. You cannot think what an anxious business has been the conveyance of so many Instruments safely from Toronto by land, and with every care several of them have suffered a good deal — nor will my uneasiness upon this score be soon relieved for the canoes are unloaded every night, and every night will put it in the power of a clumsy voyageur to ruin my hopes.

Lachine — Frid<sup>y</sup> 29<sup>th</sup> I am happy to say I removed here this day — we start tomorrow — nominally only however, for upon the first day they seldom go beyond two or three miles. I start in as good health as you could wish. I have not felt any inconvenience from the winter and am always the better for hurry and hardwork. You may expect to hear again from me before I reach Lake Superior. Meanwhile with my best love to all the family, I remain my dear Mother

your affectionate son,

J. H. Lefroy

(B)

Têtu's Hotel (25th April)  
Notre Dame Str.  
Montreal

My dear Younghusband,

Your box has been safely delivered to Mr. Gibb, and I am about to give him, to pack in it when it goes back, several small articles since received — viz. 2 packages magnets from Riddell, a paper which I wish to be copied in the meteorological journal for the same period, upon some of the blank pages, then to be returned to Mr. Rawson, who wants it back, a note for Mr. Morse at Penetanguishene requesting his Meteor. Journal again, you can read, seal and send it; lastly, I can hardly make up my mind to write it, a bellrope that Penelope could not have beaten, which you must take particular care of (if not too long to hang up) having a working pull behind it for use. If too long for the room, which I fear, don't cut it, but keep it for me — I am in great uneasiness about the non arrival of my writing book. If detained beyond my stay it will be nearly the most serious inconvenience that could befall me. Airey<sup>6</sup> had not arrived when I left Kingston, nor, I believe, when Henry<sup>7</sup> left it Tuesd<sup>y</sup> or Wedn<sup>y</sup>. It serves me right for not at all inconvenience making sure of it before starting. Harvey from whom I heard yesterday promises to forward it immediately it arrives. The villainous state of roads makes the matter so uncertain. I reached Kingston about 5 on Sunday morn<sup>g</sup>, observed there, and left on Tuesday.

<sup>6</sup> Sir George Airy (1801-1892), British Astronomer Royal, 1835-81. Airy reorganized the Greenwich Observatory and designed improved instruments of observation. Lefroy often refers to his instruments by the name of the maker or designer and it is likely that the reference here is to one of Airy's instruments which Lefroy intended to take to the North-West.

<sup>7</sup> Corporal (later Colonel) William Henry, R. A., Lefroy's assistant on the magnetic survey.



I stopped again 24<sup>th</sup> \* at Williamsburg halfway between Prescott and Cornwall, and got a good and complete series of obs<sup>ns</sup> there, got here at 1/2 p 5 on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup>. Gambey<sup>p</sup> was literally shaken to pieces, the loose parts lying about in the box, but no damage done, the most serious part was that one of the agates had jolted out of position, and I had no level to adjust it again. I was obliged to do so by hand and test with the needle. Also parts of the theodolite were shaken out. The Barometers I carried on my shoulders all through, a little mercury has escaped from one of them, but I hope not enough to impair its value, it will alter however the correction, and unluckily old McCord with whose standard I might compare, is absent. Henry has not yet arrived. I am uneasy for his Instruments.

Sir Geo Simpson arrived on Saturday even<sup>g</sup> and I called on him on Monday; he is the toughest looking old fellow I ever saw, built upon the Egyptian model, height two diameters, or like one of those short square massy pillars one sees in an old country church. He gave me much definite information, one result of which is that I shall not winter at Moose, but somewhere more to the North, and take Moose, if necessary to visit it at all, on my way down next season. But I shall probably engage for nothing certain, as I shall meet him up the country and have then had a little experience as to my own capabilities. He is a fellow whom nothing will kill; I don't suppose myself able to do all that he calls practicable. It will even be easy to return to Toronto by the winter if Moose be left out, that being very much out of every line. His

\* Obviously an error in date. This should probably be the 20th.

<sup>p</sup> A nine-inch Dip Circle by Gambey. A piece of Lefroy's instrumental equipment for the Magnetic Survey. With stand it weighed 27 lbs.

plan however is for me to return from York Factory and ascend the Saskatchewan to Edmonton House, thence, making *winter* journeys with a small equipment of Instruments, only visit Slave Lake, pass a few weeks there, and returning to Athabasca remain there until the Spring. I mention this although I have not decided, and do not intend to decide upon my plans until reaching York Factory. He has furnished me with a circular letter, a copy of which I send to you to forward to Sabine after entry in our own books. Nothing can be more liberal or more complete than the assistance afforded. I am surprized however to see that the wages of the Company's servants, when employed exclusively for my conveyance are to be charged to the R.S., having supposed that all such assistance was rendered gratuitously; that clothing and supplies should be paid for is natural. An officer of the 71<sup>st</sup>, Capt Stacke, goes up as far as Sault Ste Marie with me. He seems a desirable companion, and pleasant, good tempered fellow, he goes as a sportsman. I intended before leaving Toronto to give you a memorandum, to provide to the possible contingency of an accident to myself. I enclose it, sealed; if you receive official information of such an event you can open it.

April 26. Henry arrived yesterday, with the exception of Fox,<sup>10</sup> none of the Instruments have suffered much. Fox is almost shaken to pieces. I send herewith a list of what I take with me, and what I leave to be returned to Toronto or forwarded to England. I wish all these papers to be entered in the Miscell. register — 1/24 to, recd. No. 1. and then forwarded to Sabine. He has, I am happy to say, sent me an azimuth compass of the com-

<sup>10</sup> A Dip Circle by George of Falmouth of the construction of the Robert W. Fox. One of Lefroy's magnetic instruments. It weighed in box complete with stand, 37 lbs.



mittee's construction, but nothing else, and I doubt if my box was ever received. I have written to Mr. Stevens at Quebec, and his reply will be forwarded to you. Believe me my dear Younghusband

Ever yours most sincerely,

J. H. Lefroy.

## II. FROM LACHINE TO LAC DES CHATS

(A)

Lac des Chats  
Ottawa river. C.W.  
6th May 1843.

My dear Julia,<sup>11</sup>

I cannot resist an opportunity of sending a line to beg you for sweet Saint Charitie to write to me by any opportunity you may hear of, considering the great pleasure your letters have given me, and much more the price I shall set upon every letter I find after my winters seclusion on returning (if D.V. I return) next spring to more accessible posts of the H.B. Company. Perhaps you will not believe me in declaring that I shall look forward to none with more pleasure, I may indeed say with so much pleasure, as to yours, for your letters contain thoughts and feelings and do convey to me somewhat of my cousin Julia's mind. Facts are against me in these protestations, for why, you may say, have I not written before. You must suppose me oppressed and hard driven with business. I often thought of writing; if I did it not, it was for such weighty reason as even you would approve, but now this corner of a tent, and Mr. McDougall's offers to take letters, leave me no power of postponing it.

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<sup>11</sup> Miss Julia Lefroy, a cousin of J. H. Lefroy, who lived at Church Oakley, Basingstoke, Hants, England.



Like that ancient lady, I am "behind the tent door" with blanket and greatcoat spread on the rock beside me, by way of bed, but I should like to place you in the door, to look with me over our picturesque encampment. Imagine a table rock shewing its grey face between patches of moss and grass with young fir and juniper growing about out of the crevices; three large birch bark canoes, the prettiest vessels that float, lie bottom upwards with keel to the wind, the open side to the fires; and under them and before are standing or lying some fifty voyageurs and Indians, talking French Patois, with more oaths than you would like to hear, and the light plays on the white tents behind and their red shirts and caps in true Rembrandt effects. So you see there are some beauties in this mode of travelling had one but time to enjoy them. We passed our first portage today, a short one, to avoid some of the most picturesque rapids and falls I have yet seen, called the Chat falls. Like most others on these rivers, their height is inconsiderable; the beauty is to see the water shooting and darting in an hundred directions round rocks and islets, and in the graceful groups of firs and birch trees overhanging the channels. It is hard work to ascend these channels but I must not begin to talk of that so soon. Nothing can be more simple than our system. About an hour before daylight tents are struck, canoes loaded, and off we start. Breakfast at seven or eight, tea boiled in a kettle very expeditiously, dinner about 1. Camp about an hour before sunset. Any one fond of sketching would find ample time for doing so. I am obliged to give all my halts to the particular work I travel on. The canoes are very large, each carrying about 14 paddles, and four passengers besides a quantity of baggage. Perpetual picnicing like all other pleasures

may become insipid, when undertaken merely for pleasure, but when incurred as a necessary means of effecting business, it is agreeable to be able to report well of it. We take up a very goodnatureed, careless, idle fellow, a Captain Stack, who travels as a sportsman, and is a pleasant companion, always willing and ready to do anything, he reminds me something of MacClintock and is an Irishman also. The rest of the party consists of two officers of the Hudson's Bay Company, three or four clerks, boys, a half-breed from the Columbia, who has been studying medicine, and gives me a better idea than I had previously of that race, and two women, whose history I don't yet know. Until today there has not been much to admire in the scenery of the Ottawa. It is tame and monotonous but from this Lake upwards has another character. However it is this kind of travelling that makes one more than any other appreciate that beam celestial, "which evermore makes all things new", the difference between a dull leaden day, and a sunny one turns the scale of enjoyment in a great degree. Spring is less advanced here this season probably than even in England, there is nothing positively green excepting the firs. I query whether the rapidity with which it will burst out in a week is a gain or a loss in itself as regards the pleasure of watching its progress.

Tell me of books, and ideas, and the progress of opinions, whether it is true that so much really Romish leaven is developing with the revival of unity and discipline in the church.<sup>12</sup> Being so much out of the

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<sup>12</sup> The reference here is to the Catholic revival within the Anglican Church associated with Keble and Newman and known as the Oxford Movement. Lefroy was not in sympathy with the doctrinal aspects of the Movement, particularly those expounded by Dr. Pusey, cf. *infra*. n. 31.



world I can speculate on what is going on in it with more liability to error, it is true, but with less prejudice than if more in it; and a misgiving that some great mystery of iniquity may be masked under this good work often occurs to me, and not the *less* so, when I see the alarm and agitation of the dissenting organs. Truth, I think, in this world, is like the bridge with broken arches in Mirza's vision, one man may stand upon a more continuous portion than another, but no one can pass from end to end, and even those cut off by widest gulfs of error have some solid fragment which gives them all their footing. A propos to which, it is only upon this theory that I can understand or excuse Carlyle's indulgence towards such men as Voltaire and Diderot (Essays). He respects them on account of that fragment of truth, but even this does not justify to my mind the tone in which he speaks of them. A righteous moral severity is an essential part, I even think of charity, much more should it be exercised towards such men as those, whether deceivers or only deceived. And now my dear Julia goodbye for a long time. With love to my aunt and cousins. Ever your affectionate cousin.

J. H. Lefroy

### III. FROM LAC DES CHATS TO SAULT STE MARIE

(A)

Sault St<sup>e</sup> Marie,  
20th May /43.

My dear Younghusband,

As this will be the last opportunity for several months of writing to you, I must not allow it to pass without a line. Progress thus far pleasant and satisfactory. We start about  $\frac{1}{2}$  p 3 every morning, stop for Breakfast about  $\frac{1}{2}$  p 7 when I observe for time and Var<sup>n</sup>, and for dinner about  $\frac{1}{2}$  p 1. The other canoes proceed immediately after dinner, mine remains behind while I observe Gambey and Fox. This takes about 2 hours, we then follow, and overtake them after they have encamped, usually about 8 oclock — take supper and lie down until the cry of *lève! lève!* turns us out before three in the morning. The discomfort of this mode of travelling is chiefly a want of time for washing, dressing and so on. I verily believe some of the party have never washed since we left Montreal. I manage to do so very imperfectly most days, but never undress except to put on a clean shirt now and then. I find it very difficult with our short halts to keep my observations and journal booked up, and shall have the greater part of the former to work out after we return, unless I find time in the winter to do so. The Instruments have not suffered as yet, excepting



from rust. Some of the new 3 inch bars were rusted last time I looked at them. Henry behaves very well, and is extremely zealous and hard working. We have had generally very fine weather especially in crossing Lake Huron, but were detained 24 hours at the mouth of r. Francois by a gale of wind. These halts are Godsend to me, and I should be glad to have one once a week — one can write in the canoe, but in a cramped position, exposed to splashing, and otherwise uncomfortably. Stack of the 71st, who goes on as far as Fort William, is a very pleasant addition to the party. He and Bomb. Henry and myself occupy one canoe with 13 paddles, they are roomy comfortable things. As for sport I suspect he has been disappointed, an occasional partridge is picked up at the Portages, and a few fish caught, but nothing to reward a man for coming so far; we dont stop long enough to allow him to look for game.

I hope you safely received a considerable number of miscellaneous papers given to Mr. Gibb for you. I have also written since from the Ottawa. It has been a disappointment to me not to have received the letters I dont doubt the Halifax mail had for me; it had not reached Montreal when Sir Geo Simpson left, and he was two days after us. Do not let Bomb. Malin forget his engagement to collect and skin the fish from the Lake this summer, of course any small expenses he may have to incur I will repay — Believe me my dear Younghusband

Yours very sincerely

J. H. Lefroy

I mentioned before that my desk arrived safely the morning we left.

#### IV. FROM SAULT STE MARIE TO FORT WILLIAM

(A)

Fort William  
Lake Superior  
30th May/43.

My dear Fanny,<sup>13</sup>

I am very glad of an opportunity of thanking you for your beautiful Bellpull, it is so much too good for our Cottage at Toronto, more particularly as I shall see but little of it there, that you may expect to see it hereafter in my drawing room at Paradise Cottage, where it will match a stair carpet of worsted which Lady Frazer has engaged to work for me. Meanwhile I am rather anxious to know what use Younghusband will make of it. In all probability he will make a great mystery as to who worked it for *him*, but tell each young lady there as a secret, that it was worked by some other and a different one.

Fort William is the first stage of my progress, a starting point for a fresh departure. We reached it on Sunday night and here I have parted with the Brigade of Hudson's Bay canoes, and shall follow them tomorrow at leisure in one of my own. A journey of one or two thousand miles alone is not so agreeable as a solitary walk before breakfast, but I should have been an incumbrance had I remained with them, and there is a sense of independ-

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<sup>13</sup> Mrs. Frances Rickards, sister of J. H. Lefroy.

ence, of dignity, of unity, in the other mode which is almost a compensation for the "aching void" caused by want of society. Mr. McLean,<sup>14</sup> the officer in charge, was a person of intelligence and information beyond what one might expect from a man who has all his life been scraping beaver skins together at remote stations, he was too very kind and accommodating to me: the rest were young men. Rather than send a son of mine to become a clerk in the H.B. Company I would see him a day labourer at home. He would there be within the influences of civilization, would have society, would suffer (probably) less from privation, and enjoy as high an average of comfort. These boys lose all that, without a compensating prospect of acquiring wealth in the long run. They lose all religious influences and restraints, frequently marry squaws, and return to civilized life as old men, if they do return, with habits which make it no longer enjoyment to them. We have had a very pleasant journey thus far. We left the Sault Ste Marie at the opposite extremity of the Lake, on Sunday morning (the 21<sup>st</sup>) and have been a week coasting the northern shore, more than once detained by foul winds. It is remarkable how soon a heavy sea gets up in this Lake, and as it is full of deep bays, we were several times obliged to land until it had gone down before they could be crossed. The voyageurs are rather timid sailors, although cheerful and indefatigable. On the Sunday that we arrived here we were 21 hours, including some hours detention, between starting in the morning and arriving for the night, the last few hours were spent in a starlight

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<sup>14</sup> John McLean, an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company and author of *Notes of Twenty-Five Year's Service in the Hudson's Bay Territory* (London 1849, 2 vols.).

paddle across the grande Traverse as it is called, a wide bay of an ill name. It is very pretty to see a number of canoes pressing straight forwards at a rapid pace; I think the circumstance of all the paddlers facing the direction they go in, instead of turning the back to it as in rowing, gives a peculiar effect of intentness, of intelligent will, to the movement. Then they strike up old French songs, more particularly in approaching a post, many of them very pretty, almost all curious. Here is a specimen of one with every mark of antiquity about it. And one of the prettiest airs. It is a sort of poetry much superior to any our common people retain.

Mon amant est à guerre,  
 Voilà mon coeur voilà !  
 Mon amant est à guerre,  
 Pour se combattre pour nous,  
     repeated in chorus  
 Pour se combattre pour nous, tous doux,  
 Pour se combattre pour nous.

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S'il gagne la bataille,  
 Voilà mon coeur voilà !  
 S'il gagne la bataille,  
 Il aura mes amours,  
     repeated in chorus  
 Il aura mes amours, tous doux,  
 Il aura mes amours.

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Qu'il perde, ou qu'il gagne,  
 Voilà mon coeur voilà !  
 Qu'il perde ou qu'il gagne  
 Il les aura toujours.  
 Il les aura — & —

I shall try and collect a few of the best, but it is impossible to take them down from their lips, their pronunciation is so extra-ordinary. Mr. McLean gave me this one, and another not quite so good.



I am happy to say that this mode of life agrees with me, in fact there is very little exposure in it, if it rains by day one has Macintoshes and greatcoats, if by night one is in a tent. And I sleep as soundly on the ground with a blanket folded under me as in a bed. As for provisions we live upon much the same things as at sea, salt beef, or more commonly luxurious hams, with biscuit, and drink floods of tea; the Pemmican diet does not commence until about the parallel of Norway House. I find all my time requisite for making and reducing the observations, and in fact usually have to make up in the canoes for arrears of sleep, which is done easily as they are roomy and comfortable, the centre is reserved for the officers, and the bedding wrapped in oilcloths forms the seat. The scenery on Lake Superior is very fine, "rocks and Pines, rocks and Pines" some of the party used to complain, but rocks and Pines make a very picturesque combination. Then there are calm secluded, woody bays, with water as pure as glass, where we used to light our fire for breakfast or pitch the tent at night, and this gypsy mode of living, this continual change of scene opens the heart to its enjoyment. It is a great regret to me that our Sundays are not distinguished from other days in any way, except that I read the service as we go along to my N.C. officer. I need, dear Fanny, all your prayers that I may be preserved in soul and body in the performance of the duty to which I am called -- Give my love to them all at home. I have not time to write. Kind regards to Rickards. Believe me,

Ever your affectionate Brother,

J. H. Lefroy

## V. FROM FORT WILLIAM TO FORT GARRY

(A)

Savannah river, enroute

6th June 1843.

cont<sup>d</sup> to 1st July

My dear Mother,

I hope to find time enough for the future, in the Portages, to keep up some sort of correspondence with you, and take advantage of an unexpected one here to make a beginning. A number of trunks of trees have got matted together across the stream, and we are put to the trouble of unloading the canoe and carrying it over them. I shall begin my Journal from Fort William, where the brigade remained two days, and I three. I wrote to Fanny from thence, but had not time to write to any one else in the family. Fort William was the principal depot of the North West Company during its rivalry with the Hudson's Bay Comp<sup>y</sup>, and is one of the largest establishments in the country. The wreck, rather, of one, for as the greater part of this Company's Furs go home from Hudson's Bay, they have suffered it to fall to ruin. Ranges of sheds and stores are empty, and the old mess House, sixty feet long, in which so many hardy traders used to tell of their exploits, is now a shed of canoes, half a ruin. It is situated in a swamp, on artificial ground, without any advantage of scenery, although below it, on the lake and all the way above, the scenery is

beautiful. There are a dozen or two of Indian wigwams about it. An old squaw in one of them washed some things for me. How they can have emerged cleaner than they entered, as they certainly did, is a mystery to me. I mention it because the difficulty in paying her lay between giving tobacco or *tea*. May not commence triumph when squaws drink tea, and Hindoos eat ice? Acting on Sir Geo. Simpson's recommendation, I took a canoe to myself here, with a crew of two Indians, videlicet Laurent Thewhawassin and Baptiste Sateka and four French Canadians, too small a crew for the load. We were supplied with provisions, and a small tent, for my use. The provisions supplied for me were biscuits, two hams! pork, and some fresh meat, with a bag of uncommonly bad potatoes, to this was added a small keg of Port wine, which I took reluctantly solely as a "medical comfort" to be used upon occasion. At the very first portage the fellow who carried it, tapped it, and probably the whole of them drank from it, thereby losing time to say the very least, so without making any remark, I pitched the keg into the middle of the stream as soon as we were embarked again, and so had done with it.

June 1<sup>st</sup> we left the fort at about 1/2  $\approx$  4 which is a late hour for a start here. Capt<sup>n</sup> Stack went up with me as far as our Brkfast halt and then we parted, to my regret. He was not a man of any information or talent, but a goodhumoured, willing, amusing fellow, up to many things I have still to learn, understood camp cookery, could tell a Diver from a Blackduck at half a mile and so on. He reminded me a good deal of McClintock. The day was a beautiful one and our course lay up a very pretty stream without other interruption than one short Portage where the current was too violent for us

to stem. Next day (June 2<sup>nd</sup>) about an hour after starting, we came to a place where I had to land and walk 6 or 7 miles over swamps and hills, to lighten the canoe. There were two or three streams to be waded, in one of which one of the women of the party which preceded us got a glorious roll. Stack gallantly volunteered to carry her over, she being such another as Mr<sup>s</sup> Wayne. No, said one of the young fellows, let me do it, so he resigned, and the fortunate successor to the honour, being not half strong enough, broke down in the middle and both got ducked. The Portage of the Keg Perdu follows this, and half way along it occur the beautiful Falls of Kakabeka, the second in magnitude, perhaps even the first in picturesque beauty, in N. America. They are higher than Niagara, but not more than a fifth (I should say) of the breadth of the Horseshoe fall alone; this may rather exalt your idea of Niagara, than lower it of Kakabeka. A broad, black, glassy, stream comes down, between high and wooded banks, narrowing immediately below the fall, where the banks become precipices and seem to close in to catch the stream again in the leap; the falls cross it obliquely so as to give a beautiful mixture of lines and curves, of spray from one portion with the pure unbroken stream from the other, the volume of water is immense. The falls are very difficult of access and between swamp, rain and spray, I got a thorough wetting. As for the height, I could not measure it, but should guess it to be between two and three hundred feet.<sup>15</sup>

The next day (June 3<sup>rd</sup>) took us to the first of the long Portages, at the entrance of Dog or Chien Lake. It is

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<sup>15</sup> Lefroy is in error here and earlier when he says that the Kakabeka Falls are higher than those of Niagara. The Niagara Falls are 160 feet high and the Kakabeka Falls, 130 feet.





about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles long, with a very steep hill to be ascended. To carry a heavy canoe over such a place, and then return again and again for a load, is such work as you have no idea of, a load is from 70 to 100 lbs, the canoe however amounts to more. We got there about  $\frac{1}{2}$  p 4 but could not get the greater part of the loading further than half way that night, and so tired were the men that though it was a frosty night they preferred sleeping without their blankets to returning a mile after their last load, to fetch them. That was an uncomfortable night, cold with little of wood for the fire. I could not get the tent pitched until nearly 10 o'clock. About  $\frac{1}{2}$  p 3 the next morning (which was Sunday) we set to work again and completed the Portage so as to start by 5 A.M. One of the most beautiful views in the country occurs from the hill here, looking back upon the Chien river: of a kind of sleeping beauty: a wide expanse of undulating country covered with unbroken forest, with the stream winding through it and with the blue mountains on the shore of Lake Superior for a background.

We began to meet with Indians occasionally, descending to the Fort with the produce of their winter hunt. One canoe contained a very pretty little savage, asleep in an heap at the bottom. I pinched and stroked it, as one does a pretty child, and stole a look at the old squaw's face to see if it shewed any symptoms of maternal satisfaction, but there was no trace of any notice; however a little brother or sister who was watching the child, was less immovable and laughed and kissed it with great delight. I gave the Indian some tobacco, as I do nearly all I meet, then we shook hands and parted.

The scenery all the way was very pretty, a constant succession of narrow streams and small lakes, where we

always had a violent current and numberless portages, until we reached the height of land, where the streams begin to run the other way, and those we were ascending lose themselves in a swamp. (June 5<sup>th</sup>) Their termination, at the foot of the long Portage of the Prairie, is remarkable enough; it is a small lake or rather a large pond, without current, the water nearly or entirely tasteless, pure, and containing fish as usual, but which resists the progress of the canoe exactly as if running with a violent current. "C'est toujours comme ça, l'eau est dur, c'est terrible comme l'eau est dur" was what the voyageurs said in reply to my questions. As I was paddling myself when we entered, and immediately noticed the effect, I am convinced that it is no fancy. Franklyn calls it the Viscous Lake, but there is nothing viscous in its quality. There are three or four very bad portages before getting to the descending stream. We reached it however on the 6<sup>th</sup>. One of them, the Savannah portage, is 2½ miles long and entirely through a vile swamp. Coming sometimes to these, early in the morning, as on that day, when we got to one about 4 o'clock, I could walk across before the men with their loads got over, and so come upon the sleeping scene beyond by myself. You can imagine nothing more utterly still, silent, and lifeless, than these scenes sometimes were, before the sun had risen, and when the dank mist was hanging about them. As a general rule I carry a very tolerable load for a Bourgeois (so the voyageurs call the gentlemen), Gun, Barom<sup>r</sup> Desk, haversack with books, Etc—and have to make myself useful, if time is to be saved, by cutting wood, lighting the fire, and so on, while they get on with the work. We had great difficulty on the 6<sup>th</sup> in finding dry ground enough to sleep on. The Savannah river flows through one contin-



ued swamp, and is as devoid of beauty as any we have seen. It ends in a very pretty lake however, the L. of the Thousand Islands, where we got well ducked by the rain. For two or three days following we had nothing but rain, which is real misery for the voyageurs and uncomfortable enough for me. The little tent gets so wet that it is necessary to spread a Macintosh over one's bed, the bed itself however being made upon the tarpaulin in which it is conveyed all day, is dry enough. Then there is the difficulty of lighting a fire all the wood being wet. I brought a large quantity of American Lucifer matches, not one in fifty of which will light. These are the petty troubles of voyaging and in my case may be added as another, a want of alacrity and spirit in the men, who when there is but one canoe have nothing to stir them up, and lose time in an hundred little ways.

All the way from L. Thousand Isl. to L. la Pluie, we had lovely weather and beautiful scenery, of the same simple character. We entered the latter on the 12<sup>th</sup> and were detained all the next day by wind and rain. There is a long narrow lake called Sturgeon L. before coming to it, the exit from which is by one of the finest rapids we have seen. Old Laurent, our bowman, wanted to stop about 1½ p 6 that evening under pretence that we should not have daylight for them, but I objected to this. We reached there just as the sun was setting, after a most bright and cloudless day. An Indian canoe was shooting about at the edge of the rapid, like a seabird in a storm. They always put on shore here and at most rapids, all but the two Indians, with perhaps an hand or two to assist them, but as I wanted to see the place, I kept my seat. It is good to see an Indian approach a rapid, Laurent seemed to throw off twenty years at once; jumping up on the

gunwale of the canoe, a moment's glance decides him as to his course, and then jumping into his place seizing his paddle another moment takes him into the middle of it, tossing about on waves which seem huge, and shooting past rocks where one false stroke would ruin all: there are three short rapids following another here, and in the second his paddle got jammed in a cleft in the rock, he turned round with such a fall that I thought for the moment he had lost his presence of mind, a violent effort however freed it, and in another stroke or two we were out of the eddy, in still water. We then encamped, at about 8 oclock, and the Indian and his family came and lit their fire beside us. He had rather a good looking young squaw, with an heap of children, shivering urchins, in ragged rabbitskin robes. We got some sturgeon from him, it passes universally for fresh *meat*, and I gave him some powder and shot as well as tobacco, to his great happiness. The Indians however seldom thank one for anything, only give a grunt of satisfaction. We started again before 3 oclock. That was a luckless day, for I left my keys behind where we breakfasted, and the whole of the *next* was lost in returning for them.

I was detained a day at Fort Francis, at the head of L. la Pluie by the most determined rain. It is amusing to see the sort of people one finds at these smaller posts. men whose lives have been spent in the woods, who have married Indians or halfbreeds, who never read, because they can get no books, have but a mail once a year (this year it has been left behind by mistake) and yet by birth-right or prescription are Gentlemen. In the present case Mr. Isbister was not quite of that rank. I could not make out whether he was French or English. However he received me hospitably, enquired whether I would be "pleased

to accept of some sturgeon for dinner", because they had nothing else, and entertained me well all day. They have a curious aversion to allowing their wives to be seen. At Fort William for exam. although there two or three days, I could not get a glimpse of the lady, nor was I more fortunate here. It seems to indicate a painful consciousness that they are not of their own rank, or an equally painful, and very false idea, that a gentleman from the settlements would ridicule their deficiencies. To be the wife of an H B officer, and most of them now are married, is no enviable lot. They must follow them to the most savage and remote stations, and take part in all the privations they encounter. Mr. McLean lost his at Esquimaux Bay. Hudson's Straights. However, like the wives of army subalterns they are mostly born to it, have looked all their days to such a vagabond life as their natural lot, and have no wishes beyond it. There is a school of educating young ladies at the Red River n L. Winnipeg.

I have written thus far at all sorts of odd moments, and in all sorts of odd places. I now write on the shore of L. Winnipeg, wind bound (June 28<sup>th</sup>). About 20 miles from L. la Pluie which we left the 15<sup>th</sup> we came to an Indian village, the first regular one I had seen, and halted to purchase fish. You must know that they were very badly off at that post for provisions in consequence of the unusual height of the water, and we were obliged to depend in part upon these opportunities of purchasing for the men. The chief came down to receive us, a fine looking young man, painted, as most of them commence here abouts to be, and wearing a huge silver medal. After shaking hands I strolled through the lodges, leaving the men to make their bargains. The village consisted of

about 25 large lodges surrounded by frames for drying fish, with a slippery path winding through them, and about ten children and twenty dogs to each lodge. They are all of the same construction, made of poles meeting in a point at the top, and covered with birchbark. They sew the bark for this purpose into lengths of six or eight feet, by three in breadth, capable of being rolled up conveniently and carried in the canoes, for it is as flexible as leather and it makes a better covering than one would suppose. The squaws turned out in great numbers, laughing and chattering with anything but misery in their looks; the dogs are the great annoyance, more than once a beast got a timid grip at my leg as I walked past. For six or eight inches of rolled tobacco we got sturgeons weighing, the bones being taken out, twenty to thirty pounds. Just below this village, where there is a rapid, we came to a perfect fleet of Indian Canoes, some ten or twelve, fishing together, it was a pretty sight. There is a missionary (Wesleyan) at the village, not doing much however, for he can only speak through an interpreter, and there are great difficulties in inducing these wilder Indians to accept Xtianity or to send their children to school. Not the least of these arises from the rivalry between Church of England, Church of Rome, Wesleyans and Baptists, all of whom have missionaries in the country, and the Indians are quite acute enough to take advantage of their divisions.

We had a beautiful broad and unobstructed river to take us to the L. of the Woods, and reached it next day, (Frid<sup>y</sup> 16<sup>th</sup> June) about 2 oclock, meeting however with a very grievous accident by the way. My last Barometer got broken, the other was broken on L. Superior, it was a sad disappointment to me. We were on the L.

of the Woods from Friday to Tuesday. On Sunday morning 18<sup>th</sup> about 5 o'clock, the guide found that he had lost his way, and said we must return to the encampment to allow him to recover his trail, so we put back, meeting however with some Indians where I had halted to breakfast. One of them returned with us to shew the way. However about four or five in the afternoon, after the Indian had left us. Laurent got bewildered again, and after abusing the "sauvage" for setting him wrong, put back again to recover his own ground. A good deal of lightening began to appear about 1½ p six, with a most threatening sky, so I put on shore for the night. It was lucky we did so. for the tent was scarcely pitched when the most terrific thunderstorm and gale of wind set in that I ever saw, with a sea that would have sent us to the bottom in five minutes. I never saw a more magnificent sky, a fiery rainbow appeared in the E just as the sun was sinking, the space within a bright sulphur colour, without a heavy blue; livid green and sulphury clouds were dashed in the wildest confusion over the western sky. Next morning (Monday 19<sup>th</sup> June) we renewed our search for the Rat Portage, but Laurent was totally bewildered, going first east, then west, then south, while our course lay due north. At last I insisted upon his putting about, and going up to the head of the lake, by so doing we at last recovered the track, but not without losing it again, so that we did not reach the Rat Portage, which we were in search of until Tuesday morning 8 o'clock, instead of Saturday evening. I made my approach to the Fort in a manner unsuited to the dignity of science. There was a small bay to be crossed and instead of waiting until my canoe was ready, I got into a light one in which a little Indian boy and girl had come across;

at best they are most difficult craft, upset in a moment. I had never got in one before, and ignorantly squatted down on my heels in the bow where there was some clean birch bark, without being aware that the stern was thereby raised fairly out of the water. I never had such a piece of work, sometimes it turned right round, then it would only move side foremost, then a slight movement would half upset it. All the while Mr. McKenzie<sup>10</sup> was waiting patiently on his side to receive me. When there is but one person he always gets in the middle, that was the mistake. Had I not been in a hurry I should have enjoyed our cruise among the thousand Islands of the Lake, all so closely studded and grouped that there is no appearance of its being so large a Lake. The wonder is not that the Iroquois lost his way, but that they should know it at all: that over a line of some three thousand miles these Indians know every stone and stump, and are able to guide a canoe without compass through intricate channels in which a European eye is lost at once.

From the L. of the Woods to Lake Winnipeg is but a journey of some three days. I was however five, having had to stop rather more than a day for observations. It was here that the musquitoes began to be very bad. I was severely enough punished, but my unfortunate assistant much worse. I don't complain, because it is nothing to what they will be, especially when the sand flies and bulldogs (as they are called) come out, but they are a great drawback from the enjoyment of travelling. One can neither eat or sleep for them. The Winnipeg river is full of beautiful falls and rapids, a stream as broad as the

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<sup>10</sup> Probably Donald McKenzie (1783-1851) Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, Governor of Assiniboia, 1825-1833. In 1833 he was appointed in charge of Fort William.



Thames at London towards the lower part, and above rather a succession of Lakes, united by rapids, than a river. One portion of it is now dangerous in consequence of the water being so high. We left it therefore for a small stream Pinawa which there becomes navigable. I groaned inwardly on entering it knowing what the musquitoes would be; they did not disappoint me.

I reached Fort Alexander on Sunday morn<sup>g</sup> the 25<sup>th</sup> June after a very heavy storm of rain with Thunder and Lightning, which overtook us about 8 oclock. The men were so rejoiced at the Prospect of getting Toro (pemmican) which is first met with there, that they pressed on in spite of it. They had nothing but wild rice which is more like oats than rice, previously, with occasional fish, no meat. That is light fare for men working so hard. My provisions just held out, all but the biscuit which was spoiled, and was a great loss.

I fear such repeated allusions to Sunday travelling will strike you uncomfortably, as I confess the idea did me, but it is absolutely requisite. One no more thinks of stopping a canoe than of stopping a ship, nor would the day be more honoured by the men sleeping or idling it away, supposing for a moment that one were to stop, than by their labouring, while they would be consuming provisions and abbreviating by one seventh a summer barely long enough as it is for the journies to be made in it. I mention this because the necessity of continuing to travel may not have been clear to you. My own practice is to work as little as I can and to read the service to my assistant once. At Fort Alexander however for the first time I was unable to do so or to get ten minutes retirement. The officer in charge, Mr. Finlayson, was extremely civil, but was living in a temporary shed, with no spare rooms and

it rained heavily all day. I had the luxury of sleeping in a bed there, but the musquitoes would not allow me to enjoy it. An accident, which I forgot to mention, occurred to one of my Instruments at The Rat Port<sup>ge</sup>. It was thrown down and broken, and obliged me instead of going from Ft Alex<sup>r</sup> on to Norway House, to visit the Red river settlement to get it repaired. We left Tuesday June 27<sup>th</sup>, a calm and beautiful day, and made good progress over the muddy lake which is so shallow that the water is tepid under the sun. Next day (Wedn 28<sup>th</sup>) it blew steadily and raised a sea such as no canoe could face. We had again a thunder storm, with torrents of rain, and a greater quantity of lightening than I ever saw before: however we were encamped upon a dry sandy beach and did not mind it. Two very pretty little Indian girls paid me a visit *that morning*, with something that looked to me to be boiled grass, in a birch-bark dish, which they offered; it had a sweet taste but was stringy and tough, however I gave them something for it and afterwards went to look for their cabane. I could not discover where they came from, or find them again. The next day Thursd 29<sup>th</sup> it was calm enough to allow us to proceed, and we reached Lower Fort Garry, the commencement of the settlement, about 5 that afternoon. It was the most oppressively hot day I ever experienced, with an unmitigated fierceness in the sun, which therè was no enduring. I dozed all day. To my great surprize and not less so to his, the first person I saw on entering the Fort was Sir George Simpson himself. He gave me a very kind reception and next morning 30 June we rode over to the upper Fort, where I am now writing. (Saturd<sup>y</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> July)

I shall start D.V. on Monday for Norway House, thence to York, remain at York F<sup>r</sup> until the 21<sup>st</sup> then



return. and go to Cumberland House, thence northward to Athabasca, which I hope to reach about the 20<sup>th</sup> Sept. and to remain there until the following June. It is a long stay to look forward to, but the navigation does not open earlier. I shall however go further to the northward if the season is an open one returning there only when winter sets in.

This Fort is the seat of Government, the Capital of the Colony. Here I find myself once more among all the luxuries of life, eating with silver forks, sitting on sofas, there is even an English lady here, Mrs. Finlayson,<sup>17</sup> but I have not been so fortunate as to see her. I have been so much engaged that I have not seen outside the Fort in the two days, and so have seen little of the Settlement itself. I had not even leisure last evening to go and look at the magnificent sight of the sunset over the Prairies.

Take care to send letters to Mr. Keith at Lachine, in time for the Winter despatch which leaves Canada about Jan<sup>r</sup>. I shall then get them at Norway or Cumberland House about July. I should like some one to keep a kind of Family journal noting down as they occur public as well as private events, and this I suggest as a good way of corresponding with Maxwell: have a public sheet of foolscap in the writing book, then when the newspaper contains any political matter of great interest, or when the hay is got in, let him be informed of it. Never be afraid of writing trifles to a distant correspondent, they are what he values: when a friend sends remembrances let him enter them himself, duly dated. Have you seen or heard anything more of Col Dundas. I write to him from

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<sup>17</sup> Wife of Duncan Finlayson (1795-1862), a former Nor'Wester who entered the service of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1815 and became Governor of Assiniboia 1839-1844.

here. I sent a letter to Sophia by the express canoe last week, she should get it in August. Now with my love to all in the family, believe me my dear Mother

Ever your affectionate Son

J. H. Lefroy.

(B)

Fort Frances on Rainy L.

15<sup>th</sup> June 1843.

My dear Sophia,<sup>18</sup>

Sir George Simpson promises me another opportunity of sending a letter to Canada by his Express in a few weeks, I can discharge my debt to you. A day on shore brings me such innumerable occupations, so many observ<sup>ns</sup> to be made, and entered, and redated, so many Instr<sup>ts</sup> to be unpacked and re-packed, so much to be examined, so many details to be gone into, so many things to be overhauled and set to rights, that had I a dozen lady power of pen, it would be difficult to spare enough for writing the few letters I am anxious to forward. I have no intention of allowing my friends to forget me. When one turns one's back upon the world, correspondence appears in a new light, and each letter written is rather a modest refresher to them, than the exchange of equal barter. Apropos to forgetting friends. I was seized with an attack of sentiment the other day, while engaged at a long Portage, and actually wrote some verses with which I shall indulge you: they were written upon the back of

<sup>18</sup> Miss Sophia Lefroy. She lived at Ewshort House, Farnham, Surrey, with her mother.

a young birch tree in a beautiful spot between two small lakes:

June 9<sup>th</sup>, Portage deux rivières.

(1)

Which is the Haunted spot,  
Where Spirits come and go?  
Most pallid Fear, perceive them near  
And faint at what she vieweth not,  
Must the faint pulse, the standing hair  
Speak an unearthly presence there,  
The heart that feels its nothingness  
The frailty of the man confess,  
May not the far away, the loved,  
Be near us, yet not this be proved?

(2)

Alas for Memory, if it were so!  
Where were the pleasures she can give  
The Images she biddeth live,  
The gift that like the Enchanter's Art,  
Can all but tones and touch impart,  
Can open to Affection's gaze  
The happiest hours of other days,  
And e'en her loneliness can cheer  
By whispering that friends are near.

(3)

Alas for me, if it were so!  
Far from my own, my Father's hearth  
A wanderer on this wide Earth,  
Now listening 'neath a torrid sky  
The snowy seabird's plaintive cry,  
Now chilled beneath the northern star  
A solitary pilgrim there,  
The eyes that should behold with mine

Where Nature's hand is most divine  
 Far from my side. Far from mine ear,  
 The voice that should exclaim, How Fair!

## (4)

Alas for me, if it were so!  
 If silent stream and tangled grove  
 Were haunted not with those I love,  
 And if their shadowy presence there  
 Spake to my heart but tones of fear.  
 The diamond crown of night were dim  
 If other eyes beheld it not.  
 Scarce heard were Nature's sweetest hymn  
 No other ear to catch the note.

## (5)

It is not so, when ye are near,  
 Each one of the familiar band,  
 Each face, each form to memory dear,  
 Touched into life by Fancy's wand.  
 When Mary's mirthful glance and tone  
 Their charm o'er sunny scenes have thrown  
 Or Julia's sweet and thoughtful gaze  
 Drinks of the daylight's failing rays,  
 E'er yet have faded from the skies  
 The hues reflected in her eyes.

## (6)

Such be the forms my steps to bless,  
 Such haunt for me the Wilderness  
 Such prove the antique vision true,  
 No longer by an uncouth crew  
 But half divine; in every shade  
 Scaring the wanderer from the glade  
 But by such gentler witchery  
 As eyes unshrinking may descry.



To describe almost any one of these lakes would be to describe the whole of them. Their beauty arises from the small scale which allows the banks and islands to bear a due proportion to the breadth of water, although in none of them very lofty or bearing what we should call fine timber. There is scarcely anything but spruce, larch and Birch upon them; but now that the bright transparent foliage of the last is just shewing upon the dark masses of the others, the effect is extremely pretty. We kept ahead of the Spring for a long time. It is only within a week, when we have been also descending to lower levels, that the Spring tints have come out. Rainy Lake has kept its character; I am now unable to start for a most determined torrent and have had little else in crossing it. It has no beauty of scenery and the shores and island are rather less wooded than usual, the only wonder is that any trees can support themselves upon such mere rocks.

I forgot to mention that Sir Geo. S. lent me on starting Cottrell's *Siberia*,<sup>19</sup> which disappointed me; from a man who had led rather a dissipated life, I expected a light sketchy work, full of anecdotes and lively remarks; the only thing lively about it is his running fire at that unfortunate Captain Jesse, which is rather impertinent than otherwise. Moreover there are some very badly written passages. I hope it has had a sale. I had seen some extracts in Canadian papers which are mostly supported by pilfering, so suppose it has made some way.

I have been a long time coming thus far. One day was purely lost by my having to send back the canoe between 30 and 40 miles, for my keys. It was Sunday, and I passed

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<sup>19</sup> C. H. Cottrell, *Recollection of Siberia* (London, 1842).

it in the most perfect and entire solitude you can imagine, being one or two thousand miles from Church I could not go there, nor indeed pass a space of two or three yards, between a lake and a rapid. It was at a portage. The day passed quickly for all that. It was one which proved that misfortunes never come singly. A spark from the fire reached my Gun cover and nearly consumed the stock, as it stood at night, too near. A Therm<sup>r</sup> fell on purpose and got broken. I cut my leg rather badly in chopping some firewood, and Roubilliard broke the handle of the axe. The voyageurs give me some trouble and annoyance by their laziness and pilfering habits, stealing our provisions whenever they can lay their hands upon them, and always taking ten minutes when five ought to be enough. I grudge every moments detention, and so am continually urging someone. Unluckily I forgot to provide myself with a French dictionary and grammar, so while I am daily speaking if possible worse and worse French by learning their patois. I cannot take the opportunity of increasing my stock of words and phrases. They talk very bad French, full of provincialisms, *icit* for *ici*, *fret* for *froid*, potatoes, *patats*, Etc. In fact the separation from the brigade has been a loss to me in these respects, as well as in point of progress. Mr. McLean was a referee in such matters. I suffer most in the latter however, while with them it mattered not how long we stopped for my daily observ<sup>ns</sup>, the other canoes went on, and on overtaking them, sometimes not before 8 or 9 in the evening, there was the tent pitched, fires burning, kettle boiling, everything ready. We have to do all this ourselves now, with fewer hands, so that I am obliged to land soon after 7, whatever rest the men may have had in the day. I do not expect to reach York Fac-





tory much before the 15<sup>th</sup> July instead of the 1<sup>st</sup> as at first intended. I cannot receive any letters from you much before Xmas; they will then be sent out by the winter mail, (those that arrive by the H B vessel in September.) I am happy to say that this active out of doors life agrees with me perfectly. I never catch cold, and am getting daily stronger by the exercise of paddling. Were there but a little more leisure nothing could be more enjoyable—

My love to all the family. Believe me my dear Sophia

Your affectionate Brother

J. H. Lefroy

## VI. FORT GARRY TO YORK FACTORY

(A)

Red River, L. Winnipeg  
July 9<sup>th</sup> 1843.

My dear Riddell,

. . . It is more difficult to do anything in the small or North canoes than in the large ones, and the intense heat and glare of the sun adds to the difficulty. I find also since leaving the brigade numberless little daily interruptions and employments which were spared when with it, and when I had no cares about anything but my proper work. I should like to see a trace of the curves, upon tracing paper, compared with those of Toronto, perhaps you could send me this up in the winter. Bomb<sup>r</sup> Henry continues to give me great satisfaction. He is a very valuable man, not very sharp, but willing and good tempered. I feel more and more the difficulty of getting good observations in a journey of this kind. The constant exposure, and unavoidable rough treatment the instr<sup>ts</sup> often experience are fatal to great delicacy of adjustment, while the impossibility to working up every thing as one goes along, prevents me from discovering immediately the irregularities in their results. Double the time that I can give would not be too much for such observations as could be said to stand alone, to be each a satisfactory determination for its given locality. It is mighty well when travelling by railroad, able to overhaul everything

at the Hotel in the evening, able to choose times and places, to produce uniform and unexceptionable results. I hope so much will not be expected from me. I think for the future I must give up many observations to be enabled to spare more time for the remainder, be contented to have but few to show, not one for every day. An idea I don't like. I have had much enjoyment from my journey, the constant change of place and scene, the fresh and healthful feeling early hours and an active life inspire, the daily interest of the observ<sup>ns</sup> all make it a pleasant pursuit, while this warm and genial season lasts. The pleasure will be much less by and by when fewer comforts can be had . . .

Believe me ever yours sincerely

J. H. Lefroy

(B)

York Factory, Hudson's B.

24<sup>th</sup> July 1843.

My dear Anthony,<sup>29</sup>

In taking up my pen to write home from this place I bethink me that I have never thanked Anna and yourself for your letters by Sir. Geo. Simpson, so this is to discharge my debt of correspondence and of gratitude. I have been unable to get a budget of letters prepared against my arrival here, and am too busy to expect to write many while here, but then I have been so good a correspondent generally since leaving Montreal that it is the less necessary.

We left the Red River, whence I last wrote, on the 4<sup>th</sup> July. It was a pleasant holiday to me while I remained.

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<sup>29</sup> Rev. Anthony C. Lefroy, Henry's brother.

not in respect to work, but in being stationary, in being among comforts and luxuries, in being in Society. Nothing can exceed the kindness and hospitality shewn to strangers in this country, their visits are so rare, and there is so general an impression, not always a just one, that they must needs at the best miss many things, and so require more attention, that every officer seems to feel under an obligation to give them the best reception. I rode down with Sir Geo. S. through the settlement to the Lower Fort and then took canoe again. Although prairie, it is not quite destitute of underwood, and there are one or two pretty spots on the bank of the river; the school is on the prettiest. This school is the place of education for all the officers' children from all parts of the country, half-breeds, varying in shade from an English complexion to almost a mulatto: there were about 20 girls and nearly as many boys there, coarse looking animals, with little stamp of quality, not one pretty face. It is curious that some of the half-breeds would be considered fair even in England, while others are exceedingly dark. The school-master was brought out from England and seemed rather above par. He certainly had more refinements and comforts about him than any man else in the settlement. I was introduced to only one of the three clergy, Mr. Cochrane,<sup>21</sup> a man much respected, zealous out of the pulpit, in fact a good man, unhappily however the quintessence of dulness and badness as a preacher; never did I hear his equal. What a pity it is that there should be such an idea as that men of the most inferior talents are good enough for the Colonial Church. It is rather curious that nearly the whole of his congregation are Presbyterians.

<sup>21</sup> Rev. William Cochrane, Anglican missionary at Red River 1825-1865. He was Archdeacon of Assiniboia.

Which beguiles him into some irregularities of which we cannot approve, such as a very long extemporaneous prayer before sermon, and another after it, as well as arbitrary omissions from the service. There is no presbyterian minister. The colony is happily circumstanced for peace and quietness, the Roman Catholics and the Protestants inhabit different sides of the river, speak different languages, and follow different pursuits, so they seldom come in contact, and little or no party spirit exists.

I was eight days on L. Winnipeg. It is a treacherous lake, so shallow that a sea rises in a moment, and full of wide bays which are so many traps at which one is constantly detained. The lake is so shallow that we got aground one Sunday morn<sup>g</sup> in the middle of a violent thunderstorm, at about a mile from the shore, and were detained on a miserable naked sandy bar all day. My Iroquois bowman, Laurent, had a character at one time for being an adventurous fellow, but is now rather too old for his work, and was always saying that it blew too hard to go on. Laurent shines most in the rapids, nothing can be more beautiful than the manner in which the two Indians guide a canoe down them. I have frequently seen them steer through rocks where there was not a foot to spare on either side; then he turns round with a guttural laugh, ho, ho, ho! to the other when it has been a very close run. The consequences of striking a rock, in most cases, are not serious, the canoes are so elastic and so easily repaired that little harm is done; in extreme cases it may be a question of upsetting but not often. We have frequently struck rocks, and been carried over them, but although without danger the sensation is not agreeable. There is a great excitement in going over a moderate fall, say of three feet; a plunge and a dart and the canoe is

through it. In coming from Norway H. we have had more rapids than in any previous part of the voyage. After the flat tame scenery of L. Winnipeg it was a relief to get again in to rivers and among little lakes, but the last 100 miles on approaching the sea are very gloomy and dull. This river is not the outlet of L. Winnipeg (which discharges by the Nelson r.) and is extremely shallow and very rapid; but for the first 80 or 90 miles even canoes, in ascending, are obliged to be hauled up by line.

The mosquitoes are worse here than anywhere else; an annoyance at times of which you have no conception. Nevertheless I must confess that I have not found them so bad as they have been described: the large fly called the bulldog gives a more painful bite, but it is followed by no irritation and they are stupid brutes, easily kept off. A bulldog draws blood by a fair bite, instantly; a mosquito is a considerable time boring, before he gets blood, and a long time gorging himself. The only place at which I much mind them is behind the ear, which is a favourite place with them. I have repeatedly seen them draw blood through my trousers which are thin cloth. In spite of mosquitoes and bulldogs I am thankful to say I have never been in better health, or enjoyed travelling more. There is much that is tiresome, much that is uncomfortable, but a groundwork of novelty and interest throughout which redeems all that.

I leave this place on the 26<sup>th</sup> or 27<sup>th</sup>, and D.V. shall leave Norway House again for Cumberland about the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> August. I then turn northward and hope to reach my winter quarters on the Athabasca Lake about the middle of September. I have been getting winter clothing here to take in, blanket capot etc. etc., with quantities of tea and sugar, 24 lbs. of the first, two kegs of the second,

and this is thought a very small winter provision. As I am anxious not to load my canoe I restrict the supply. I inclose a bill for £25 which I beg you to apply as follows. Tailor at — Pettigrew £15. Send £3 in Post office order to Capt<sup>n</sup> Stace R.A. Woolich. I inclose a note to accompany it. The remainder in Charities. viz your school subs £1. and some societies you have been in the habit of paying for me. My love to Anna. and my god-daughter. I am delighted to hear such accounts of little Mary. Believe me your affectionate Brother,

J. H. Lefroy

## VII. YORK FACTORY TO NORWAY HOUSE

(A)

Norway House.  
August 8th 1843.

My dear Sophia,

As I find journalizing of any description quite out of my power, I must give you a farewell line from this spot before turning my face northward, and account for proceedings since leaving the Red river. I say, farewell, because I shall have no other opportunity of sending a letter before June next when you may expect that a budget may be started. I am looking for the like from you in March by the Hudson's Bay mail. The family are a wonderful number of letters in my debt, half a score that were written in the months of April and May are unanswered, for all and sundry of which I expect a letter in the summer. To skip over a long period, over all its events, ideas, and reflections, because letters cannot be sent to the end of it, is manifestly unfair; we all sin in this way, and neglect the good gift of answering as they pass the changes of mind or circumstances of others, as well as of presenting our own, by our practice of postponing the writing of letters until certain times or intervals.

I had upon the whole a favourable passage of Lake Winnipeg; although much detained I was yet less so than every one lays his account to be. My principal recollection of it is a doleful one, of the excessive annoyance of the



mosquitoes. We encamped on the 5<sup>th</sup> July, the day of leaving the mouth of the river, on a dry sandy beach covered with the wild vetch, which has a pretty flower, and with a few green aspens and willows behind, also behind those was a swamp, and immediately after sunset forth they sallied. I was obliged to make a fire of wet grass and lay down in the smoke. But this is the only occasion I have reduced to that pitch, and then chiefly for want of a yard of gauze for a veil. I have since procured one, and am seldom much troubled with them. There is a large fly called the bulldog which some people think worse. I don't, because no inflammation follows the bite, and they are great stupid, fussy creatures, like bluebottle flies, easily kept off. Unlike the mosquitoes however they draw blood by a fair bite at once: the mosquito takes nearly a minute to pierce the skin and more than that time to gorge himself. It is perfectly easy to see them doing so. I frequently watch one with a Stanhope lens for the apparatus with which nature has furnished them for the purpose is very curious. York Factory and the low grounds in its neighbourhood are very bad for them. We may truly reckon it not the least of the blessings of Old England that all plagues of this description are unknown.

I remained but two days at Norway H. and left on the 14<sup>th</sup> July for the sea; for about one half of the way, the route is through small lakes, and up a small river as far as its source. Our Iroquois guide made a curious blunder the first day, by taking a wrong branch; before we had gone half a mile we came to a beaver-dam, and soon after to another, which should have told any man that we were not on the frequented route. However the Indians are excessively obstinate, and once wrong are more at a loss than white men: it occasioned *a loss of four hours*. I have

parted with old Laurent now, and got a Frenchman named Blondel, the best voyageur in the country: with all his mistakes however the other had some merits, it was beautiful to see his address and skill in the rapids. One day we got entangled among some small islands near Holey Lake which you will find in the map. The water was very cold, the rapid unusually difficult on that account, and somehow the canoe got round stern foremost where it was too narrow to turn, and in this position we went backwards over a bit of a fall of two or three feet — they are never at a loss; then the old fellow turns round with a short laugh ho! ho! ho! to the other Indian when the danger is passed. In talking of danger I must not give you a wrong idea; it is only danger of breaking the back of the canoe. Once only the canoe has had a narrow escape from upsetting. On our way back from York Factory, on the 6<sup>th</sup> August, we were hauling the canoe up a rapid, only the two Indians in it, when the line suddenly broke, over she went, but their poles were over first, and they kept her right, of course she swung round, and rapidly descended the rapid. The canoe was a good deal injured, and caused me some delay. The following day one of the best men also was nearly lost; he had jumped into the water to push the canoe away from a rock, when the rock being slippery the force of the stream carried him away, and he was about half drowned before the Indians who upon that occasion also were alone in her, could overtake him with the canoe. It is usual at rapids to lighten a canoe by landing all spare hands, perhaps retaining one or two alone. We found extra difficulty in consequence of the water being unusually low, which does not diminish the force of the current, rather the contrary, but it brings to the surface numberless rocks that are otherwise covered. The men are constantly

obliged to jump into the water; in fact I frequently did so myself. In fine weather I usually go barefoot, and it is no hardship to get wet in a warm sun.

I had the pleasure of receiving today some letters that ought to have reached me at Montreal. It appears that they arrived a few days after my departure, and the packet being addressed on H.M. Service the people there thought of consequence enough to send it in by a special Express. Sir Geo Simpson however tells me that the Comp<sup>y</sup> will bear half the expense which was about £30. They sent a mail of their own by the same opportunity. There were. Mamma March 24/ Charles no date/ Isabella April 1/ and some others. It was you may be sure a great pleasure. The official letters were of no great consequence, not enough to have required an Express although I am very glad they sent one. Charles enquired about my stock ticket for the £200 for which Maxwell had licence to draw. in addition to the £400 for which I accepted his bill. I never got the money from Mr. Quilter at all. The last stock I possessed was sold at the time I lent him £200 if I am not mistaken, at any rate some time in 1839. And all papers of that description I left in Canada. I inclose a power of attorney or what will serve as such, to enable him to receive any money for me which he knows how to get at. I am much vexed at Mr. Quilter's not having paid Cox & Co. — — £100. I have certainly got on the wrong side of their books if he has not done so. and it is an injury to my credit. I would not have a bill dishonoured for the world; nothing is more possible than that they have done so. There is no remedy but if such has been the case for Charles to discharge it as soon as he can get my money. However I am far beyond duns and

bailiffs now and shall have siller in the bank when I get back.

I arrived here on the 7<sup>th</sup> August from York Factory. We had a very beautiful display of aurora a night or two previous. I had been anxious to reach a point called the Painted Stone P<sup>se</sup> from some natural stripes upon the rock. It is at the dividing of the small rivers flowing into L. Winnipeg from the waters running to the sea, and we pushed on that night until long after dark. It was a calm and beautiful night after a rainy day. The aurora began by a small arch which rapidly extended and became almost fearfully bright as it reached the zenith; it then broke up, wheeling and dancing over the sky in a wonderful manner, when presently up rose another arch of a bright pink colour and joined it: there was an appearance of depth about it, not as if a mere passing flash, but as if solid, and every fibre in the most rapid and incessant motion; it lasted an hour or two. However auroras are much more brilliant in the winter.

Any letters for me by the winter despatch had better be sent to the Hudson's Bay House care of Hon H.B.C. not later than the 25<sup>th</sup> November, as the mail is made up in London for the Liverpool packet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec<sup>r</sup>. However a day or two later will be in good time. As I said before I shall get them in the spring. The grand mail which comes up by the spring canoes, and which I shall find at Red river in June, will I trust bring me many more. These letters must be sent to Montreal care of Hon H.B.C. by the packet of March and April. The latter may be late as it was this year. All subsequent letters should be addressed to Montreal also, that I may find them there when I arrive in the Autumn. Probably if sent to Woolwich they may be forwarded with official letters. You can

find out this from Riddell. (By the bye Mamma always spells his name Riddle for which he would not thank her.)

I find I have given wrong direction about my letters. First write for the mail which is made up at the H.B. House for the Liverpool packet of December, and send the letters in time to Riddell or Sabine to forward. Second, write by Sir Geo Simpson in March following. Third, write for the H.B. Ship which sails for Moose Factory in May or June (June 4 last year). I shall be there D.V. when it arrives. After that write to Montreal as already directed.

I paid a very interesting visit yesterday to an Indian village near here, at which the missionary resides or is to do so. The fact was I have got a new canoe here, and the men were anxious to try her, and asked me to take a row, so I requested Mrs. Evans<sup>22</sup> the Missionary's wife to accompany me to her school. We had several volunteers making up a fine crew, the canoe nearly empty, so that we flew through the water, the men singing "La belle rose" and other songs as hard as they could. The school children amounting to 60 were soon got together although it was seven o'clock in the evening, and we heard them read and spell and sing in Indian and English. They are Crees, their language a pretty one; the astonishing thing was to hear them repeat long exercises, such as the creed, sing hymns, read the Testament etc. in English: *not one word of which* any of them understood. The missionary wishes to prepare the way for their learning the language but I think goes too far. One little boy repeated the Lord's Prayer perfectly in English, putting in his stops correctly, varying the tone

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<sup>22</sup> Wife of Rev. James Evans (1801-1846) who was General Superintendent of the North West Indian Missions of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada, 1810-1845. Mr. Evans was the inventor of the Cree syllabic system of writing.

in perfect imitation of an intelligent speaker, yet could not say it in his own language: in fact the teacher who is a Chipewyan Indian seemed to have the same sort of pride in their proficiency that a bird fancier has in an ingenious collection of piping bullfinches. Mrs. Evans is a much more ladylike person than I had expected to see, and has a fine handsome daughter whom I met with her father near the Painted Stone portage on their way with a brigade of boats to York Factory. They had pitched their little tent near the lee of a great rock, sparingly covered with small pines. The boats hauled in shore close by, and formed a very pretty encampment.

I wish Charles not to present the accompanying bill now if Mr. Quilter has not paid my £100, but in that case to lend me the £3 for Capt<sup>n</sup> Stace and send it to him at once: the tailor can wait. Love to all the family. Tell Major Birch I make the *amende* to him about musquitoes, and use curtains in my tent. Do you remember his recommendation of them at Basing and my foolish disregard of his advice? I have been ashamed of it ever since. Warn my correspondent at Oakley to write in November. I would not lose Julia's letters for anything. God bless you all, and spare us to an happy meeting no long time hence. My love to Mamma and believe me ever your affect<sup>n</sup> brother

J. H. Lefroy

## VIII. NORWAY HOUSE TO FORT CHIPEWYAN

(A)

Cross Lake Saskatchewan

August 17 - 1843.

My dear Fanny.

For the first time since leaving Canada I have been spending a day in entire idleness. I did all my necessary work yesterday. Today I have nothing to do but to write letters, read, and lounge about. The consequences of this delightful novelty are beginning to be felt in a slight relaxation of the extensor muscles of my jaws, to cure which I begin a letter to you. Only three days ago I strongly meditated one, in order to vent my complaint at an unusual detention, but then it did not last long enough to leave me in total leisure. It disfigure<sup>d</sup> all work which had any particular hold on my conscience, of all that I might not safely postpone: this time it has done so.

I must inform you that I left Norway House on Saturday the 12<sup>th</sup> Aug. on my final journey to my winter quarters upon Lake Athabasca, following a large number of Hudson's Bay barges which left a few days before for the same quarter.<sup>22</sup> I got on very well on that day, and the next Sunday 13<sup>th</sup>; on Sunday evening we encamped on what proved, after we were landed, to be a mere wall of limestone shingle between the lake and a swamp, very

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<sup>22</sup> This brigade was commanded by John McLean with whom Lefroy had travelled from Lachine to Fort William.

bad both for walking and sleeping on, but it was passed off and I was glad to get ashore at all. We were detained there the whole of Monday 14<sup>th</sup> by a heavy swell from the lake which broke in such waves on the shore that it was impossible to load the canoe; in fact it was nearly swamped in one attempt that I made to do so. Luckily the limestone contained many fossils and after completing what I had to do, it was amusement enough as well as work enough, to hammer at them. We managed to get away *at six in the evening* 14<sup>th</sup>, and get to a place which we were sure to be able to leave next morning. Leave it we did, at 2 o'clock. I am often reminded of the truth that knowledge is power. No one has a watch but myself, the men can give a good guess what time it is that they land in the evening, by the setting of the sun, but they dont know when they start. Our retreat upon that occasion was a narrow channel hardly visible from the lake, through a white shingle beach which to my surprise led us into a considerable bay or lake, totally landlocked, with black water, which contrasted curiously with the chalky tint of L. Winnipeg. It was so calm and quiet as seen at that hour, the dusky firs becoming more gloomy in the shades of the night, that it equalled almost anything I have seen in the country in striking effect. It furnished also what Jonathan calls "a caution" to my men, for they left something behind for which they had to return to the last encamping place, which was but three or four miles off. The next day we entered the Saskatchewan about noon. It was a pleasure to me to get quit of that Lake, and as I vainly hoped, of all sorts of detentions, and to be embarked on this great river, which is the highroad to the Rocky Mountains. About five miles from the mouth, the current, which is formidable from the first, becomes too violent to





be stemmed, and there is a Grand Portage of nearly a mile in length. To my great surprize I found all the boats, which left so long before me, encamped at the *furthest end of it*; a very picturesque and pretty encampment they formed. It was a clear space of turf on the summit of a high bank, surrounded by wood, seven or eight white tents were scattered over it, and before them piles of goods, bales, boxes, barrels, waiting to be transferred to the boats. Behind them were a number of Indian lodges, and all about them the most motley crowd of voyageurs, Indians, gaunt dogs, squaws in their blankets, and bead ornaments, emigrants with their families going to the Columbia, Half-breeds — all giving the place the animation and variety of a fair. I added my tent to the number for that night and was serenaded nearly the whole of it by the singing and drumming of the Indians. They have a simple gambling game, at which they play for hours together, with an eagerness which it is amusing to witness. Two sides are formed, and stakes deposited, perhaps an old coat or shirt for some yards of tobacco. One person then takes a couple of small bones or something of that kind, and with wonderful rapidity and gesticulation shifts them from hand to hand, and place to place, while his own side all time are rattling with sticks upon paddles placed before them, and singing a curious monotonous song in quick time. It is merely to repeat hihi-hihi-hi-ah, hihi, hihi, hi-ha in the same note, but changing the note all over the gamut rising higher and higher as they get more eager. Meantime every eye of the opposite party is intently fixed on the hands of the hider, and the moment one of them makes a right guess, the bones are transferred to him, and they take up their sticks and begin to sing and rattle as hard as they can. If they make a wrong guess, the opposite

party count one, and go on with their song in a triumphant tone which is more provoking than ever.

(18<sup>th</sup>) I had written thus far, when the welcome truth was proclaimed that the wind had fallen, and a universal rush took place on the part of boats, barges and canoes, civilized and savage, which should be off first. In an incredibly short space of time not a trace was left except the embers of several fires, that so large an assemblage had passed two days there. It occurs to me that you will ask where? my story having been considerably irregular; why, on a *point of land at the entrance of a small lake* about half a dozen miles above the Grand rapid. I reached it to breakfast the morning of leaving that place, 16<sup>th</sup> Aug, and in two or three hours the barges, Indians and all, came to the same spot, and were equally stopped. We were there nearly two days but got off towards evening of the second 17<sup>th</sup> Aug<sup>t</sup> and a strange piece of work we had to find an encamp<sup>g</sup> place that night. We got to a small Lake which was so shallow that we searched round and round it for a place to approach the shore, and land on. At last we found one where, after forcing my way in nearly pitch darkness through weeds and rushes as tall or nearly so as myself, I found a tolerably clear space within, we soon had an enormous fire. As the place did not admit of unloading the canoe I had to dispense with the tent, which indeed could not well have been set up. You do not know the pleasure of lying ~~down~~ under a pure starry sky, a bright moon glancing through the trees, and all around the wildness and disorder of a forest of nature.

Before leaving Norway House I had the pleasure of receiving the letters intended for me by the mail of April last, but which did not reach Montreal until the 10<sup>th</sup> May. The next will be in April or May, a long period of

silence. I hope you will write periodically whether the letters can be forwarded at once or not. Have you kept up acquaintance with my friend Bleadon? I hope so, for there is a native simplicity, goodness and sweetness of character about her, which I admire. Remember me to her and to Miss Lynn whenever you meet them. Kindest regards to Rickards, believe me my dear Fanny. Ever your affectionate Brother.

J H Lefroy.

Will you tell Anthony that I shall be obliged to him, if he will send me out in the spring any numbers of the Church newspaper which may have struck him as interesting. say half a dozen, they must not be too numerous, either on account of political and general news or of Church information. I should like to receive also a few London papers at the same time, warranted to contain matters of interest.

(E)

Cumberland House.

23 August 1843.

My dear Isabella,<sup>24</sup>

This is the place at which Dr. Richardson passed the winter when on Franklyn's first expedition, so it has a name in the world, and to come to such a place in travelling over places that are *nowheres* (as some people are *nobodies*) is like suddenly finding bottom when out of one's depth. I begin to scribble a letter to you out of idleness. There is no one here. I am all alone in a bare barn-like room, with my luggage in various corners, and have not been able to work on account of the rain. It has

<sup>24</sup> Another sister of J. H. Lefroy.

been thundering and lightening like mad all the afternoon; for about an hour just before reaching the fort we were obliged to halt, during the heaviest torrent of rain I ever witnessed, accompanied by heavy hail, many of the stones as large as marbles. I never got such a pelting before. This was the first bad weather since leaving Norway House, and a fair wind all the day has been an ample compensation.

There are some very wild looking Indians here, some of whom paid me a visit. Three of them walked into the room, each carrying some trifling article of my luggage, set it down, then seated themselves. I politely turned my chair round to them and we looked at one another, because as they spoke neither French or English we had no medium of communication. They are fine looking men, with a cheerful look, and a picturesque dress. Anna will perhaps think it no compliment when I say that I know no one whose features have so much of the Indian outline as hers; it has struck me repeatedly. These men wear long black Ellocks, innocent of comb, one lock on each temple passed through a row of hollow brass beads as large as a cherry, one in the middle of the forehead hanging straight, and a long plaited lock over each shoulder. Sometimes the upper half of the face is blackened, sometimes they prefer to paint the eyes black and each side of the chin red. They wear red leggins [sic], and usually expose one naked shoulder and arm, while they carry a blanket over the other. Anthony would make numberless sketches of them. I fully subscribe to what is said of the superiority of their manner to what one expects of savages, and even among the squaws, of whom I less expected it, I have seen an absence of coarseness and a modesty and propriety of manner that were even lady-like. Some of them also are



goodlooking, with rather masculine features, but with good humoured intelligent expression. A very pretty fancy dress might be made in imitation of theirs. To begin at the wrong end imagine a pair of gay red leggins, worked with beads round the bottom and along the seam, then comes *the body* of a gown, then a kind of apron, before and behind, gaily worked on the shoulder bands and in front with beads, then comes a sort of mantilla (observe if you please how learned I am) consisting of two red sleeves and connected by a band in front, and two rectangular wings behind, which meet in a point. Then they wear several strings of beads upon different locks of hair, and when they wear a blanket by way of cloak, it is folded in the most classical form. It is to [be] regretted that they use but little soap. My Instruments excite great wonder and amazement, particularly the quick-silver. I have seen them gather like children around a few drops that were spilled and laugh at their failures to pick them up, today four or five were on their knees half an hour searching for a morsel of silver wire, half a grain weight, but unluckily even their eyes could not find it among the grass.

I am writing against time, while the last few packages are being carried to the canoe, of all things the most likely to throw ones ideas into confusion, and mine are so much so that I must give it up. I expect to be rather more than a month on my way to Athabasca, and to have cold fingers before I see it. There is a terrible portage of 12 miles, over which canoe and everything has to be carried; it will detain us a week nearly. You will find a view of it in Franklyn (the Methy Port<sup>re</sup>). You know that tea and sugar are the grand luxury of all classes in this country. I carry in for the winter use 18 lbs tea, and 160 lbs sugar. Do you think that is enough for two, my assistant consumes

it as well as myself? Then I leave here for next spring 6 lbs of tea and 80 lbs! of sugar, which is a great temptation to the gentry here, but I hope they will withstand it.

Now dear Bobbie farewell, God bless you all, and wish us an happy meeting when these journeyings are over. Love to Mamma, and to little Mary. Ever your affectionate Brother,

J H Lefroy.

Mind, encore, that I shall get letters sent by Sir Geo. Simpson in April, and again by the vessel to Moose about 1<sup>st</sup> June, after which they must be addressed to Montreal, reckoning on my arrival at Toronto about 1<sup>st</sup> November, direct there without waiting for notice of it. I expect to meet Col. Sabine there, or that he will come out during the winter. So it was arranged.

## IX. AT FORT CHIPEWYAN

(A)

Fort Chipewyan  
Lake Athabasca  
30 Sept 1843  
to  
2 Jan 1844

My dear Mother.

It will be so many months before this letter will leave the place that it will be rather a running journal or commonplace book than a letter proper, so do not look for much connection in what may follow. I feel happy to be able to date from the point I so long looked forward to as the terminus of this years travelling, and in the absence of society, and dearth of conversation, expect to be frequently in a mood for adding a few lines. I arrived here on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept<sup>r</sup>. The weather had then become so uncertain and chilly that I was glad enough to exchange the tent and campfire for a roof and fireplace it usually froze in the night, but not by day, except once. Travelling however by open water will last nearly a month longer yet. At present we are enjoying the short Indian summer which closes the fine weather of the season, so that it is difficult to believe a severe winter to be within arm's length; but the days are short and I found the length of the nights tedious in the latter part of the journey. I left Cumberland House on the 24<sup>th</sup> August, when it was blow-

ing so hard that we could not go further than a small island about two miles off and there encamped. We were more fortunate next day. There is a very rapid and shallow stream, called the R. Malign, which connects that lake with the next, in which we were retarded two or three days; the water in many places would scarcely float a canoe and it was full of rocks and stones. I was heartily glad to get quit of it. From thence to the Churchill river we passed by a number of small lakes connected by rapids and Portages up to the Frog Portage when we entered that river. The upper Lakes were exceedingly pretty but we had several days continuance of bad weather, constant wet, which prevented one from enjoying it. It is a hilly country and after the dead flats about Lake Winnipeg any thing in the shape of a hill is pleasing. I don't know why it is that the huge masses of granite which compose the hills, although generally very poorly covered with wood, are objects one admires; that rocks please us because they are rocks, when the force of all association would appear to lean the other way. The wet continued for two or three days on that river. The first night in particular it rained hard and I happened to be sleeping without the tent as the place was not very convenient for setting it up, so bedding and clothes got wet, in spite of a tarpaulin which was over me; but no harm followed, and it was but anticipating matters a little, for it rained a torrent all day. Lighting a fire with damp tinder, wet fingers and wet wood, in the rain, is a thing some people might give up as hopeless, but a voyageur knows better. It took the corporal and myself about an hour that morning to manage it, but as it was in a long portage time was no object, and we succeeded. I eat my breakfast with a plate half full of rain and the tea pleasantly cooled by the same. It would





be rather amusing to a stranger to see the deliberate and matter-of-fact manner in which breakfast is always prepared and eaten, rain or no rain, when the hour comes. I had once an umbrella, but finding it troublesome I left it at Fort William.

(Nov<sup>r</sup> 6<sup>th</sup>) The Churchill river consists of a succession of lakes connected by rapids, with no stream between except where they occur, the scenery beautiful, the encampments excellent. The pleasure of voyaging depends very much upon the nature of the encamping places one finds every night. The perfection of an encampment is that it should be dry, hard, level, shaded by large trees — at a moderate height above the water — and with plenty of firewood. And then, when night falls, with a blazing fire before the tent, and the contents of the canteen on the ground within it, one feels that the day is well ended. I had good sport with the wild ducks in this part of the route, their numbers latterly were countless, but they were shy, a canoe makes too much noise to approach them often. A propos to them, allow me to inform you that a duck should be boiled, not roasted, and that boiled ducks and buffaloe tongues are remarkably good. We found great numbers of wild berries at the Portages, one of them in particular, the Poire, is equal to almost any fruit I know. I had gathered a number to dry for seed, but putting them out in the sun one day, a young Indian who was with me, eat them. It grows on a shrub of considerable size and would be considered ornamental in England. The others were raspberries, cranberries, whortleberries and sometimes strawberries. The poire is mixed up in large quantities with a fine pemmican for the use of the officers and this makes what is called berry pemmican

of which I never got any however, as none was made last year; the berry was scarce.

I was detained nearly a day on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sept<sup>r</sup> by the folly of the men in leaving their Pemmican on shore where we breakfasted. We were then four or five days from Isle à la Crosse, nevertheless they were all for going on, with no other provision than a little flour; but this I could not permit, so sent them back for it. They just found out the omission when arrived at the upper end of a long and difficult rapid, so had the trouble of ascending it over again. My best man fell sick here, and did not recover. I was obliged to leave him at Isle à la Crosse. That was the first night of decided frost since about the 8<sup>th</sup> June: frosts are of frequent occurrence in July and August at York Factory, and here, indeed, in most parts of the country, but we escaped. I reached Isle à la Crosse on the 8<sup>th</sup> Sept<sup>r</sup> after a repetition of very wet weather. One day's rain on the voyage is no great matter, one can dry one's things at night; the second day it becomes uncomfortable; but if continued a third it is positive misery, particularly to the men. We had three or four days in succession. At last out came the sun and the weather cleared; they immediately put on dry clothing and had hardly done so when a drenching shower came down again. I was pleased with the good humour with which they struck up a song in the midst of it and only paddled harder. I found no one at Isle à la Crosse, the Bourgeois was on his voyage. I remained from Friday to Monday, and then entered on the last stage of my journey, that which terminated at this place.

A day or two after leaving it I had an amusing misadventure. We were in a very shallow stream in which it was frequently necessary to lighten the canoe. I landed to



walk, and somehow got into the idea that the canoe had passed me, mistaking the tracks of some animals here and there through the reeds for those of some of the men, who were also walking. It was excessively hot; but I pressed on through the most entangled and difficult wood I ever tried to penetrate, sometimes wading the stream, then dashing into the bushes until the sun set, and I concluded that I should have to pass the night there: the question was how to light a fire, having neither flint, nor steel nor tinder; but I had some percussion caps in my pocket, and after many trials I exploded one of them on the ward of a large key, and lit a piece of dry birch wood. With this I managed to light a fire, and was congratulating myself on my success when I heard a gun shot behind me, and found in fact that I had far outstripped the canoe.

We reached the great Methy Portage on the 15<sup>th</sup>, and got the canoe and all the baggage across next day, a distance of 12 miles. It is celebrated for the view from the north end. It is a wide and regular valley, of great depth stretching for a distance of thirty miles to the west. The sun was just setting as I arrived there, the light glancing from the nearer foliage, and filling the distance with golden haze; there is not that variety in the autumnal tints of a forest here which makes those of Canada so wonderful, but quite enough to compose a very beautiful picture. A portion of wood in the distance was burning, and there was an uncommon felicity in the manner in which the columns of smoke rose up against a dark mass of Pines which crossed the valley behind them. The Clear-water river winds through the midst, sometimes expanding into a placid little lake, then diminishing to a thread of light barely caught among the trees. Upon the whole I

have seen very few views of the kind more beautiful; perhaps the contrast which it offers to the narrow streams and contracted scenes one has been travelling through for some time previously makes the impression the stronger. The descent from the point of view to the river is so precipitous and difficult, particularly when rendered slippery by rain, that you would wonder how it were possible to get a clumsy and heavy canoe down it, on mens shoulders. One of my men hurt himself considerably in doing it: this was an unlucky fellow; on our way to York he fell into the stream and got nearly drowned and generally encountered more accidents than all the rest put together. Here we entered on the descending streams, a great luxury after so long mounting against the current. The scenery in the valley is as beautiful in detail as in its ensemble. It was swarming with wild geese and ducks and one morning about 5 oclock we saw three moose deer cross it below us. I had a couple of Indians at that time in the canoe, one of whom goes by the agreeable name of the "Man Eater". We landed them, but they could not get within shot of the animals and the Man Eater returned disappointed. I arrived there on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept<sup>r</sup>.

My future plans are to go on to McKenzie's river in March, and return here if possible by the 1<sup>st</sup> July, then to ascend the Peace river to Fort Dunvegan and cross by Lesser Slave Lake to the head of the Saskatchewan, then to descend that river to Lake Winnipeg again, to visit the Red river again, and to start on my return to Canada from thence, early in September. I may thus get to Montreal about the 1<sup>st</sup> November. I am truly thankful to have enjoyed health and strength thus far; what remains is perhaps the most important part of the whole, because a great part of it is ground which has not been travelled by

any one with a scientific object. Hitherto I have not gone off the route of Franklyn and others. If it please God to permit me to accomplish the whole, my journey will not have been much inferior in extent to that [of] any traveller in this country. In the meanwhile my dear Mother believe me

Your affectionate Son

J H Lefroy

Dec<sup>r</sup> 1<sup>st</sup>/ 43

PS. I am half ashamed of this dirty looking letter. I am obliged to inclose these others for fear they should be stopped for want of Foreign Postage, but consider the Postage as a debt from me, please forward them — Jan<sup>y</sup> 2/44. I wish you a very happy New Year.

(B)

Lake Athabaska  
13 December 1843

My dear Younghusband,

Our winter express will depart with letters in two or three weeks, I take the opportunity of writing. I arrived here on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September, and as the cold weather had apparently commenced I gave up the idea of going any further this year. I say apparently, for though we had some severe frosts which made travelling unpleasant, the weather became milder in October and we had a beautiful Indian summer. Our arrival was a great event at the Fort. Canoes have been given up by the Company in this quarter for many years; it was about 12 since a light canoe had arrived here, which circumstance, as well as the still more uncommon one of its containing strangers, produced a universal turnout. Although assured by my guide beforehand that the Fort was one of the finest in

the country and the most famous for the men, the dogs, and everything, I could see nothing of those honours in its first appearance. Quite the contrary, it appeared to me the poorest I had seen, and did not suggest hopes of passing the winter so comfortably as I find myself doing. It is a square area, fenced by high palisades, and containing low one-storied buildings on three sides. Nearly all of them display nothing but parchment windows which have a particularly cheerless look, as you will imagine if you consider for a moment what it would be to get all your light through a drumhead. They do in reality give a good deal of light. I found here one of the young men who came up with the Brigade from Canada, Mr. Bouchier; his family reside near Peterborough, but seem to have lived in Toronto, do you know any of the name? He is a very likeable fellow. Mr. Campbell,<sup>25</sup> the Chief Trader in Charge, is a man who has been 30 or 40 years in the country, and is a very favourable specimen of the old Northwester. We form the mess.

I found there was no building that could be conveniently made use of as an observatory for the Transportables. It was necessary to build one, which we did in about three weeks with the help of the materials from an old boat house. I completed a set of measurements of the Absolute Intensity with six bars, and commenced a series of Hourly observations on the 16 October. Henry and myself have kept these up ever since. I do not expect to find much agreement between our movements and those in Canada; probably those at Sitka will prove the most nearly the same, for we are 1700 miles in a direct line from Toronto, and only 900 from Sitka. Disturbances and shocks are very

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<sup>25</sup> Colin Campbell (1787-1853), former Nor'Wester, was Chief Trader of the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Chipewyan.

frequent, but not so much greater in amount as I had expected, the greatest range of the Decl<sup>n</sup> has been 2°40'; but I add a list of some of the principal ones, by which you can compare. The Instruments work excellently and our little observatory is very complete. I mount the transit in a Porch and use it for rating the Chron<sup>rs</sup>. It does not succeed after all for moon Culm<sup>s</sup> stars, being too feeble in power, and I have had the misfortune to break the level. It is true I have succeeded in making another, with one of the spare glass tubes, but it has no delicacy; and I cannot manage to keep the spirit from evaporating, although it is kept out in the cold. I received a letter from Riddell dated June with a short note from Sabine, the other day. They were sent out by the vessel to York Factory. Unluckily Riddell enclosed a packet containing the greater part of my letters in a box which he sent out, with Papers, etc., — the box could not be forwarded by a winter express, and remains at Norway House so that I shall not get them until my return next summer. Sabine appears to have given up his intention of coming out to Canada; but speaks with satisfaction of my plans of wintering etc. He had received letters from me from Bytown, which rather surprized me, they must have caught the mail by a lucky chance. Upon the whole I think this the best place at which I could have passed the winter, because the success with which the observations could be made depends very much on the accommodation to be procured. By going on to McKenzie's river I should have fared much worse. The observatory is kept habitable by a fire which after all ensures a more *uniform* temperature than we should probably have without it, besides being absolutely necessary. It is only when there is much wind that we cannot keep it uniform, our parchment frames let in too

much cold air. Hitherto the winter has been unusually mild. Once only the Therm<sup>r</sup> has been as low as  $-19^{\circ}$ . The cold weather is to come.

And now to give you some idea of our domestics. We live upon Whitefish chiefly, varied with dried or fresh moose meat, or buffaloe, as the hunters send it in. Pemmi-can is not much used and except upon the voyage, we have it as a stand by. They grow potatoes here, and have cows; flour is the scarcest article; bread is unknown, but we indulge sparingly in a sort of galette much like what we call Johnnycakes. There are a good many partridges about the place, white, spruce, grey and another sort called the Pheasant. Bouchier and myself shoot them and so add a luxury to our list. When I first arrived wild ducks and geese were abundant, but owing to the very low state of the water it was difficult to get at them. I shot a few. The white partridges and pheasants are so tame that I have shot them close to the fort, and indeed have seen the latter settle upon the houses. I have however too much to do to go after them often, they have both a propensity for keeping about the Fort and are always more abundant in their neighbourhood than elsewhere. The quantity of Ducks and geese, mostly the Canada goose or Bustard, that we saw coming down the Elk river was incredible. One morning also we saw three moose, and these were the only large animals seen on the voyage. We set traps for Foxes, hitherto without any success; but the men of the Fort catch them pretty frequently, and they catch minks, fishers, martens, etc. Wolves and wolverines are at present scarce hereabouts. Time passes very rapidly and to me agreeably enough, I borrowed a few books at Norway H. and found some here. These, with chess, fill up the short time to be disposed of out of the observatory, for 12<sup>h</sup> of each 24<sup>h</sup>





are of course passed in it. My plans for next year are to go to the McKenzie by the latest winter travelling i.e. March, return here by June or July. go up the Peace river, and cross the Plains to Edmonton, thence to descend the Saskatchewan to Red river and so home. I do not expect to reach Canada until very late, probably November, so that I shall be obliged to you if you will tell Cooper to get my room etc. into order about that time. I am exceedingly anxious to fulfill this whole plan although it will cut me very short in point of time towards the close. Hitherto, so far as I can judge, the observations are satisfactory. Lloyd's needles became unserviceable after leaving Norway H. and I took to the method of vibrations for relative H. F., although Riddell has been much inclined to recommend that of Deflection; but it is easy to show that the former is the best and capable of the greater precision . . . I suppose I shall find some changes. Remember me to the Macaulays, Robinsons, Boultons,<sup>26</sup> if they ever ask after me, and believe me

My dear Younghusband Yours very faithfully

J. H. Lefroy

(C)

Fort Chipewyan  
11 November / 43

My dear Anthony,

I picture you to myself at this moment seated at tea in your Parsonage hard by the Church, Anna making a pair of mittens for little Mary. In all probability however, taking longitude into account, you are in the profoundest sleep; still, I hope in the aforesaid house, and dreaming

<sup>26</sup> Leading families in Toronto whom Lefroy had met during his brief stay in the city before setting out upon his journey.

of a reduction in the price of coals. Except at Canon Hall, where there was a coal pit at the back door, I never was in a place where fuel was so liberally consumed as here, as is needful: all through the winter the men of this Establishment are almost exclusively employed in cutting and carting it. We have not yet had any very cold weather, once, only, the therm<sup>r</sup> has been two or three degrees below zero.

I wish to excite your commiseration for the neglected and churchless state of this part of the world. It would seem under a perpetual Interdict; for sixty or seventy years large sums of money have been drained from it to the enrichment of England, and yet until last year no missionary had ever crossed the Saskatchewan, consequently many have been born but none baptized, many buried and married, but not with any religious rite whatever. Last winter Mr. Evans, the chief of the Wesleyan Mission, visited this post and those below it. He is a zealous and active man, as that long winter journey proved, and he held out hope to the Chipewyan Indians that a missionary would be sent among them: but how lamentable it is that the Church allows dissenters and Papists to go before it in the field. The latter have several missionaries to the South of the Saskatchewan, and one at Edmonton upon it; they are likely to send one to this quarter. The state of the case is this, by far the greater part of the whites in this country are Roman C. viz almost all the servants and labourers in the Company's employment; of the officers, the greater part are probably professedly Presbyterians, but none of a rigid stamp. They would prefer a Church of England missionary to any other. The Indians know nothing of the Gospel, but are anxiously desirous (at least the Chipewyan and

Beaver Indians) of Instruction: the half-breeds, the women and the children, born and bred at the forts, may profess one or other persuasion, but know nothing of either and would at once follow any missionary who might come among them. It is interesting in this deep religious destitution to hear occasional anecdotes of the natural craving of men after some religion. I met a half-breed, a man with a large family, from Edmonton, who expressed his joy that a missionary had come there at last, alluding to a Wesleyan who preceded the R.C. and pointed to his children to explain his interest on the subject. Mr. Campbell the resident Factor here, was formerly among the Beaver Indians; they would sometimes say to him "you are at leisure now, sit down and tell us of the Master of Life, and how we may become good livers." An old Chipewyan, the other day, who had heard something of the obligation of the Sabbath, was telling him how he kept [it] himself, and of the difficulty he had in keeping his children from playing on that day. I have been surprized to hear that the Indians in many instances observe the Sabbath, knowing no more—probably they do so on some superstitious grounds but it shews a readiness to receive instruction; and indeed of all the Indian tribes the Chipewyans from their character are the most hopeful subjects of experiment. They are remarkably cautious and provident, a timid race of men, very acute for their own interests, and rather better off than their neighbours. Unluckily their language is intolerably difficult, but they mostly speak Cree which is remarkably easy, and there are plenty of interpreters to be found. Mr. Evans's interpreter with his Crees at Norway House, is a Chipewyan by birth. I sometimes speculate on the wordly benefits a missionary might gradually

do to them. It is curious that they have never found out how to domesticate the reindeer, <sup>27</sup> although the greater part of them subsist on it. It is the only animal on what are called the Barren grounds to the N.E. of this Lake. Nor do they practice any sort of agriculture although the Crees have done so for a long time. It is probable that a missionary would gradually get some of them into more settled habits. They have always been remarkably brutal with their women. Missionary schools in which boys and girls are brought up together necessarily amend that. Of late years their intercourse with forts has considerably improved them in that respect. The hardships a missionary must undergo would be severe to one who took his scale from civilized life, but by no means so much so as most people would expect, nor anything which motives much inferior to those of a Missionary do not lead men to submit to every day. I doubt indeed whether, putting out of the question the want of society, a man's health and energy would not be much less tried here than in India. Mr. Evans was not present at Norway House during my second visit, but Mrs. E. shewed me the school and village, of which I gave an account to Sophia.<sup>28</sup> I afterwards visited a missionary establishment called the Pas, at the mouth of the r. Basquian [Pasquia?] on the Saskatchewan; it is Church of England, and sometimes visited by Mr. Smithers,<sup>29</sup> a missionary from the Red River. It was then in charge of a Cree catechist, a man of much inferior intelligence to Mr. Evans's assistant. Unhappily this contact of Church and dissent produces controversy: previously to

<sup>27</sup> Caribou.

<sup>28</sup> See pp. 50-51.

<sup>29</sup> Rev. John Smithurst (1807-1867), Anglican missionary at Red River, 1839-1851.



Mr. Smithers's visit, Mr. Evans occasionally visited the village and christened several persons. Mr. Smithers afterward baptized these and many more to the number of 80, telling them that what Mr. E. had done was to go for nothing. The Indians of course understood nothing of the question, and looked upon it precisely as they do on the disputes of their medicine men. He whose medicine is strongest gets the victory. The Schoolmaster however told me that a Clergyman was expected from England, possibly by the vessel of this year, so I hope to find him there on my return. The situation is a favourable one. There is considerable quantity of good land about it, a very rare commodity in this rocky and swampy country. A missionary sent to this district would probably station himself upon Peace River. Only a day or two ago I heard of some Indians to the number of 20 families who travelled there last winter from McKenzie's river, having heard of the promise made by Mr. Evans that a missionary should be sent there. The gentleman in charge of Fort Vermillion offered them ammunition and other necessities a few weeks since, wishing to send them back to their own quarter, but they have refused to move until the missionary comes. Now it must be a strong motive which induces an Indian to act against the advice and directions of the officers of the Company, whom they generally look upon as having the authority of a Chief. Upon the whole then there appears much reason for our Missionary Societies to bestir themselves. The expense of maintaining and establishing a missionary here would not be great.

(Decr 1) I find the time passing very rapidly here. A day or so ago I had the pleasure of receiving a few letters from England, but the greater part, as I suppose, certainly all from Ewshott, were enclosed by Riddell in a box,

which box will remain at Norway house until I fetch it next August. I am delighted to hear such accounts of little Mary. Charles tells me that his coins are going to be published by Ackermann. But does not say how, why, or at whose expense. It seems a pity that a collection of such unquestionable interest should not be communicated to the learned world. Who edits them? I suppose some accompanying dissertation will be part of the scheme. It may increase the value of . . . (?) property. I have so many more letters to write that I cannot make this a very long one. Give my love to Anna and Mary and Believe me,

Your affectionate Brother

J. H. Lefroy

(D)

Fort Chipewyan  
2<sup>d</sup> December 1843

My dear Fanny,

Two or three days ago I had the pleasure, it was a very unexpected one, of receiving your letter of June, and the happy news it contained was a consolation for my disappointment at finding all my Ewshott letters left behind. Generally, the letters brought out by the ships are not forwarded to this quarter until the following March, but I happened to have left a sick man behind at Isle à la Crosse, so when he recovered, they sent him on with them. I trust my dear Fanny, that your anticipations have been most happily realized, that I shall find a rival to little Mary in the affections of the family. None of my previous letters had contained any hint of such an expectation.

This reminds me that I have learnt some valuable nursery secrets in this country, particularly one which

would be indeed "a real blessing to Mothers." You must have noticed that children are obliged to kick to help themselves scream; now the Indian women tie their children hand and foot, they swaddle them up in soft moss and strap them down to a board the moment they are born, the consequence is that they cannot scream. Indian children are remarkably quiet. Moreover if the board has a strap to it, they can be hooked up to anything convenient. In civilized life a mother would have all her nursery hanging round her sitting room. It seems to be my fate never to be out of reach of that disagreeable noise. At St. Helena I had little Phillip Kempthorne, as well as a parrot that imitated him. At Toronto my servant was in the adjoining room and here I have a grandchild of Mr. Campbell's separated only by an inch of board. I submit in patience, but wish the child sometimes considerably further off. I have however the satisfaction to hearing them whip it pretty often.

It is curious that in this country while the distinction between the Bourgeois and the voyageurs and servants is properly maintained, there is very little difference between their wives and daughters. They are equally uneducated, equally obliged to do all menial offices for themselves and without much difference in their domestic circumstances: the family of the gentleman are not ladies, as indeed it is evident they could not be, yet the distinction is new enough to one coming from civilized life. It is rather painful in consequence to see an apparent want of familiarity of intercourse, as if the relation of parent and child were less important than that of master and servant. Luckily for me Mr. Campbell, who has a large family, had sent them all away before my arrival, one daughter excepted, who is married to one of the men of the establish-

ment. The said Mr. C is a Canadian by birth, a gentleman in character, as all the officers of the Company whom I have met are, a quiet, kindhearted man, with some humour about him, very anxious to do the agreeable to me, so that I find myself comfortable enough. The solitude these men are so much accustomed to, the want of society of equals, has much less of a de-humanizing effect than one might expect. One also becomes much less critical; and peculiarities of dress, language and manner, which would be set down as inconsistent with a man's being a gentleman, here go for nothing for the plain reason that the gentleman is seen through them. Sometimes they are amusing enough. With respect to dress it is not necessary to say that we all disclaim entirely being judged by any standard taken from Bond Street. In this country there's nothing like leather, and sometimes one sees men, women and children dress entirely in it. I reserve my leather coat and inexpressibles for colder weather, but shall come to them bye and bye. Mr. Campbell is too old and too indolent a man to be a companion; he has a clerk who was one of our party from Montreal, named Bouchier, a very pleasant and likeable fellow. With him I set traps, shoot white partridges, play chess, and discuss the politics of Canada. He is a settler's son, come up here I imagine to lay by a little money preparatory to settling himself, and of all our party is the one I should have selected for a companion. You have no idea how quick the time passes. I have my hands quite full, having undertaken with only one assistant, the Corporal of Artillery who came up with me, to make observ<sup>ns</sup> of my magnetical Instruments every hour of the 24, which implies being 12 hours out of each day and night, in the observatory. There is a novelty in all one sees and hears in such a place which gives an interest to



many trifles that would otherwise not have it. Stories and anecdotes are pretty sure to be original, and instances new.

We have had few Indians about the place for some weeks until to-day, when a party of what are called the "Carriboo Eaters" arrived. These are a portion of the Chipewyans who live entirely on the Carriboo or reindeer, and frequent the Barren grounds to the N.E.;—having no furs to sell they seldom come near the Establishments and are in a more primitive state than the rest who can afford to purchase manufactured articles. At present they are laughing and talking in their guttural and most unpronounceable language just outside my door. I had a good deal of amusement when I first came in measuring the height of all the Indians who were here, 40 or 50 men. I wanted to ascertain the average height of a full grown Chipewyan; but they did not understand the matter, and thought it was some medicine. Many of them literally trembled from head to foot as they stood up to the wall. They are short men, the average was under 5<sup>ft</sup> 7<sup>in</sup>. I tapped one nondescript from a heap of them in a corner, to get up and be measured, and found when she stood up that she was a squaw, blushing, not celestial rosy red, but a sort of burnt umber, which was equally affecting. However, I measured her as seriously as the rest. The Chipewyans were formerly notorious for their illtreatment of their wives. In that as in many other respects the influence of the whites has produced a great improvement. A hunter will now condescend to assist in many duties which were then held quite beneath him. I cannot say much for the looks of the ladies.

Now I go back to your letter. I am glad you see something of my dear old friend Lady Frazer. She has few female relatives, no daughters, only one or two nieces of

whom she sees much, and I dont doubt has pleasure in bestowing on you something of the fulness of her kind and affectionate character. Her great want is a daughter, her great unhappiness that Augustus wont marry. So that you must not attribute to her regard for me that which she shews to you. I gave Younghusband particular instructions to cherish my bell rope, and while I allowed him to mount it, strictly charged him not to cut it now as it is, as I imagine, longer than the height of our room. This bar makes it pretty secure unless he commits matrimony with a young lady he was desperately smitten with. She went, by the way, by the flattering name of the Rattlesnake. In that case he may mount it. I understand however that the poor fellow has lost his father since I left. I shall be able to convey your thanks to Mr. Rawson, and am glad the paper gave you pleasure. It was kind of him to think of sending it, but you will know him someday, and find him a very agreeable man. Give my love to Rickards. I hope he continues on the high road to fortune, and believe me, my dear Fanny

Ever your affectionate Brother  
J. H. Lefroy

(E)

Lake Athabaska  
20<sup>th</sup> December 1843

My dear Charles,

Your letter of June, which reached me but two or three weeks since, was very welcome. By an act of forgetfulness on Riddell's part the greater part of my letters have stopped at Norway House. He enclosed them in a box, not understanding the nature of the winter communication of this country. Yours and two or three others which were

loose, alone escaped, to come on in the letter bag. I am glad to hear that you now and then see my friend Gregory; he is a man who will be liked the more he is known, and his talents and high standing in his profession, make him also a useful acquaintance. You do not say how or on whose account Ackermann publishes your coins. I should hardly have thought numismatics sufficiently studied to make it worth his while to do so on his own. I should like to hear more about it, and in what style they are engraved, whether by the machine or not. I saw at the mint in Philadelphia, Mr. Saxton, the inventor of the copying machine, engaged upon a medal of president Tyler, and was struck with the elegance and delicacy of the contrivance. He was taking a copy of a cast, but shewed me engravings done by the same machine. The Americans claim the mint machinery there to be the most perfect in the world, and I can believe the boast to be just . . .

Your account of the state of politics at home is gloomy enough. The word of scripture "perplexity" seems written upon the face of the times. England is not the only country struggling with great national questions almost touching its existence. Everywhere right is mixed with so much wrong, and wrong supported by so much right, that it seems as if the time were coming when the utmost wisdom of statesmen and the utmost strength of governments may be unable to keep the preponderance the right way. Even if scripture gave us no reason to expect the occurrence of such a state of things, there would still be reason to do so from the national tendency of things. If these times are less fruitful in public wrongs than times past, times past have left us an abundant legacy of them, for which prescription is a poor defence. They are the weapons which subvert governments, and in proportion as

secular education removes the ignorance on which subordination rests with the majority, and religion fails to establish it anew upon a better foundation, will all those weapons find some to handle them. I suppose Government has good reason for not arresting O'Connell<sup>30</sup> himself. I doubt if old George III and Billy Pitt would not have had him in the Tower long ago. We got some papers of June by the mail, they did not confirm your on dit that Dr. Pusey had been acquitted by the University Board, but said that he is suspended for 2 years, is that correct?<sup>31</sup> I hope it is; I think, knowing very little about the matter, that it is time he should be stopped; a man may be very right in the beginning of a controversial career, and go much too far in the course of it. I am delighted to hear that Mary Brydges has shown so much sense and independance as to desire to go out as governess, but how is she qualified, beyond being mistress of French? My recollection of her at Geneva is that of a not very ladylike or cultivated girl, of rather coarse style, and without any marks of education or talent. It is not an enviable field. Perhaps Sir Egerton's later years brought his daughters

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<sup>30</sup> Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847), the Irish politician who campaigned for Catholic Emancipation and Repeal of the Act uniting Ireland and Great Britain. During 1843 O'Connell conducted a series of monster meetings in favour of Repeal and in October he was arrested and tried on a charge of creating discontent and dissatisfaction among the liege subjects of the Queen. He was convicted and sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment and fine.

<sup>31</sup> Edward B. Pusey (1800-1882), Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford University, was an adherent of the Oxford Movement and from the 1840's virtually its leader. In June 1843 he was condemned for heresy and suspended for two years as a preacher to the University. In 1846 he resumed his preaching and, despite the outcry against him, continued to assert the principles of the Catholic Revival, while at the same time refusing to leave the Church of England for the Church of Rome.

good moral discipline to prepare them for it, or their pride of family could hardly entertain the thought.

I am spending the winter in this cold region with more comfort than I expected, and laying up a good store of scientific results upon the subject I am employed in. I do not expect to get back to Canada before the end of October next year. The longer I can stay in the country the better for me, the greater number of places of observations, the more complete the information upon the distribution of the earth's magnetism in North America, which is the object in view: anxiety about the precision of the results, I have, for that depends much upon the delicacy of Instruments which have never been exposed to rougher usage than in my long journeys. It was unavoidable but I hope all will be well. Believe me Your affectionate Br

J. H. Lefroy

(F)

Lake Athabaska,  
Xmas day, 1843.

My dear Isabella,

Xmas day is a good day for writing to you, for I hope you have not met, however small the party at Ewshott to-day, without thinking of its absent members. I wish you all a happy Xmas, and count upon being recollected when the chairs have closed round the fire. This thought makes old Christmas cheerful even to those who like Maxwell and myself are so far off from its social pleasures, and we feel perhaps the value of the kindly associations connected with the season, the more, because they are all that it brings. Outward enjoyment and festivity do not present

themselves. I received, dear Bobbie, your letter, or rather note (why do you treat me so shabbily?) about a month ago, and very glad I was of it, for it so happens that all my letters from Ewshott have been detained at Norway House, where I shall not get them before next July or August. They were put together in a package, and enclosed by Riddell in a box; letters, be it remembered should always be posted. The Post Office reaches when nothing else does, and more particularly in a country where communications are irregular as here. However I got three or four late ones, and I shall not find the others less interesting because a year old. It is very pleasant to hear of the happiness of Fanny and George. I was particularly delighted to hear from Fanny of "the great event" which she was so soon expecting. I hope to find a rival to little Mary when I get back to England.

I very well remember the pleasant schoolboy holiday you alluded to when we trained such a disorderly rabble of dogs to draw the Bathchair; next time I do such a feat it will be as a connoisseur, for here we have a pack of some fifty or sixty, powerful dogs all, employed in drawing sleighs. Could you see *Papillon*, and *Milord* and *Cartouche*, with their bells and red collars, trotting off over the ice, you would long to be sitting behind them. These dogs form a team; they are employed in drawing fish from the fishery on the other side of the lake, and in bringing home the meat killed by the hunters, often at a great distance from the Fort. When I go down to Mackenzie's river next March, they will have the honour of drawing me.

We have wonderfully mild weather just now, for this season, and probably are less inconvenienced by cold, at any rate indoors, than you are at Ewshott. Our fireplaces

are like small sentry boxes, and filled with logs upright which is the way they arrange them, give an immense heat. There is no sort of limit to the quantity of fuel everybody consumes, so that all the men keep up their fires all night and thus never give a chance to the Frost to enter. My room here is a little den about 12 feet square, with one glass window and one of Parchment, with a table and one chair, and a rickety old construction of a cupboard made in former days by some luxurious clerk. It opens into the Hall which is the great feature in all the houses in this country. Here the Indians assemble when at the Fort, and here they live and sleep. In going in and out at night, to and from the observations, in the dark, I used to be constantly trampling over some sleeping savage and hear him muttering and groaning as if he dreamed that a herd of buffaloes was going over him. At present there are none, but in a few days we expect arrivals. These are "the holidays", a season of fête, kept by all the Canadians, and one in which the solitary gentlemen in charge of outposts assemble if they can at the nearest Fort. We are now expecting one from Slave Lake. So you see winter travelling cannot be very disagreeable when a man prefers a journey on snowshoes of seven or eight days to passing his Xmas quite alone. The fort is a square, surrounded by a high paling, and with low one storied buildings on three sides: the parchment windows which are used in all but the houses of the officers have a very cheerless look at first; seen outside one cannot fancy that they give as much light as they really do. On the whole it had to me at first view rather a dilapidated and an unpromising aspect, the buildings have less pretention than those in most of the Forts, but one wonderfully soon ceases to remark deficiencies of this kind. I now look at it without any feeling of the kind.

It stands on rather an exposed knoll of naked granite rocks, facing an arm of the lake with an island of black pines opposite, looking so rigid unmoved and lifeless over its frozen surface, that one wonders that summer can ever thaw them. The prettiest point in the neighbourhood is called the Pointe des Morts from the burial ground which is placed there. When I first arrived the birch and poplar trees around it had not lost their foliage and the dark monumental pines which form a perfect thicket within it, made up a very pretty scene, the lake gave the background. I used to notice a number of boughs, some fresh some faded, hung here and there upon the fence. This was done by the women of the Fort. Those who had lost a child pluck a bough and set it over its grave every time they pass; it is an act of recollection whose simplicity makes it even, I think, beautiful. We have a thick wood of dwarf poplar, pine and birch behind, with several capital roads which always afford a sheltered walk. The granite hills all round are covered with pine wherever the smallest crevice gives their roots an hold, thickly enough to appear clothed, while they leave clear, hard, dry, spaces for walking. I built a little observatory when I first arrived and work away night and day.

This is the first holiday (Sundays excepted) since we commenced — New Years day will be another: time cannot hang heavily when one has much to do. We live upon meat and fish, no bread, and but few potatoes; our "roast beef" today for instance was moose ribs and reindeer tongues, and we drank "absent friends" in a bottle of Madeira, "very particular" Madeira indeed, for it was the only bottle in Athabaska. I brought it in in my canteen. Tea is our great luxury. Those who smoke have two. They have about half a dozen head of cattle here which supply



milk. Cattle have within the last few years been generally introduced all over this country, some as far to the North as McKenzie's river. Starvation is no longer, as it used to be, the order of the day. Twenty years ago it was quite a common thing for everybody, officers and all, to be reduced to living upon parchment, and sweepings of the stores, now they pay rational attention to their comfort, having no rival traders to compete with. The Indians sometimes suffer terribly. *Last year* there was a complete famine on the Mackenzies R. and *two unhappy Scotchmen* who were travelling with an express were knocked on the head in their encampment one night, and devoured by some starving women, who had previously murdered their husbands and children in the same way. This year is likely to be one of plenty. Some years seem more memorable in the annals of suffering than others; how many sad events, earthquakes, fires, wholesale accidents, famines, floods, one heard of last year. The improvidence of the Indians has much to do with their distresses: they have no forethought, in this respect like the poorer classes everywhere, who earning an uncertain subsistence cannot be persuaded to deny themselves any enjoyment even such as excess or idleness, when it is put in their power. I don't attribute blame to them, for just the same spirit actuates ourselves. We husband our comforts and pleasures because we are sure of them. I am glad that you sometimes meet Lady Frazer. I have just been writing to her. Believe me, my dear Bobbie,

Ever your affectionate Brother

J. H. Lefroy

(G)

Lake Athabaska  
1<sup>st</sup> January 1844.

My dear Anne,<sup>32</sup>

I wish you a happy new year and that you may see it out, without meeting with O'Connell's condign vengeance on the Saxons, a thing apparently more and more loudly threatened. Your New Year's day may be warmer but can hardly be a brighter or finer one than that which I am now enjoying; but it is odd to see such long shadows at midday, our sun rising little above the tops of the opposite Pines. And now what shall I tell you about a winter existence in this chilly region. I have talked of it so much, and to so many persons, that to sit down and write another letter seems like positively boring people, in spite of the assurance that those letters will go to the four winds and divide their tediousness between as many readers. Nothing has surprized me more than to find how much exaggerated the current impressions as to the hardships in this country are. People take extreme and uncommon cases as the every day representation. It is true that very great hardships are still sometimes suffered, and equally so that twenty years ago they were of frequent occurrence, but still there is nothing in the climate to preclude a fair enjoyment of comfort, and the starvation formerly so commonly endured, arose, not from the absence of a sufficient provision on the part of nature, but from the rivalry of trade which made every consideration of small importance compared with that of getting furs and ruining the opposite party. The extent to which this starvation was sometimes carried is hardly credible, when one knows

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<sup>32</sup> Mrs. McClintock, Dromiskin House, Billingham, Ireland.

that the men who submitted to it were not those who got the benefit, and is a strong proof of the lengths to which an esprit de corps and a sentiment of rivalry will support men. A General who should put his troops to half the trials cheerfully endured by these Scotchmen and Canadians would have a mutiny. At present I am happy to say, here at least, we have no fear of anything of the kind; we live in abundance, thanks to the fishers and the hunters. Fish are the staff of life, and the great provision of nature for its support throughout this country. The whitefish is found from the St. Lawrence to McKenzie's river, in such abundance that, here for example, 20 to 30 thousands are a common number from the winter fishery. They weigh 3 to 4 lbs each. Starvation among the Indians is unhappily of too frequent occurrence, partly from their own want of industry and forethought, partly from the failures in the supply of some one article of food at the season when they are dependant upon it, e.g. rabbit or muskrats, the latter of which the Indians of this Tribe, the Chipewyans, trust to entirely in the spring. I now and then hear sad stories of their sufferings, which probably nearly equal those resulting from the same causes in Christian and civilized Ireland. So little reason have we to look far from home for subjects of our sympathy, that I truly believe they do not exceed these.

I arrived here on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept<sup>r</sup> after rather an agreeable voyage from Isle à la Crosse, which was the last Fort left. The scenery part of the way was pleasing. One point of view, from the end of the great Portage de la Loche is reported to be the finest in British North America, and I think with justice. If descriptions of scenery were not always tedious I should inflict one upon you. The rarity of fine scenery in this country arises from its level charac-

ter. It wants the minor ranges of hills which intersect most other countries. The rivers either flow through swampy tracts bearing little but willow, aspen, and under-sized Pine, or through low granite hills of very broken form, nowhere rising to a picturesque height. Hence while it abounds with what an artist might note as "pretty bits" it affords very few extended scenes of hills and vale, water and forest, such as one expects.

I have now been here more than three months, very busily occupied in arranging the observations which employed me on the journey, and in making others: time can never hang heavily upon a man whose hands are full. It passes wonderfully rapidly with me. Our indoor life is the simplest possible. Out of doors I do not go much, except occasionally for exercise. Those who pass their lives in this country have generally never been acquainted with the multitude of questions and subjects which exercise the curiosity of society elsewhere. They have few resources, few books, yet they seldom complain of dullness. A sort of dreamy inactivity takes the place of other enjoyments, and prevents them from feeling what to one brought from other habits would be the supreme of dullness. Of course during a great part of the year, everyone is actively employed enough. I have two companions, Mr. Campbell and his clerk Mr. Bouchier, and find them both agreeable men with no tastes or habits which bore me; and this after all is the surest foundation of mutual comfort. The Fort numbers nearly sixty inmates of all ages, and unfortunately an equal number of dogs, the noise these latter occasionally make is incredible, especially when some unfortunate intruder from an Indian lodge gets among them. We do not see much of the Indians except at certain seasons. During the greater part of the year

they are roving about hunting furs and seeking subsistence, seldom more than two or three families. The Chipewyans interest me in many respects: they differ materially in character from almost all the others, are more provident, more steady in their industry, and more alive to their own interests. Like others of the Indians they have corrected many of their worst habits under the influence of the whites. They have a great desire for religious instruction, and would offer a good subject for a missionary experiment. Many of them refrain from hunting etc. on a Sunday, knowing nothing more than that it is a day sacred to the Master of Life. In short, they cannot fail to see and feel that their condition is far below that of the whites and is becoming yearly worse, and desire to raise themselves to a better one. This gradual impoverishment of the Indians throughout this country is so much due to us that it is a duty, in my opinion, of England, to do much more than has yet been done towards restoring their circumstances; and with respect to missionary instructions in their case as in most others we may invert St. Paul's argument and urge that as we have partaken of their temporal things we are bound to extend to them our spiritual things: this nationally we have never done. I cannot learn anything of their religious notions. The Indians generally are losing most of their old superstitions without acquiring anything better. "Medicine" is hardly heard of. The Crees, who also frequent this Fort, still have a custom of adopting some animal as a kind of tutelary saint (rather than Deity) and they have an odd affectation of never naming this object. Suppose for example that it is a bear, and a Cree in conversation has occasion to talk of a bear, he will either allude to it indirectly or else get someone else who

may be standing by, to name it. The Crees are a much finer, more manly and more warlike race than the Chipewyans.

Before you receive this letter I shall almost have accomplished, I trust, my mission, and be nearly returned to Canada, therefore address your next letter to Toronto, and don't wait to hear of my return. I wish to hear more of your Italian travels, how far you went and what you saw of English society abroad, as well as of scenes and things: travelling where there is so little to be learned perhaps inclines one to expect all the more from those who travel where every day leads people into society, and every stage to a scene of interest. Give my love to John, and believe me, My dear Anne,

Your affectionate Brother,

J. H. Lefroy

(H)

Athabaska

1<sup>st</sup> January, 1844.

My dear Sophia,

I wish you a happy new year—*la bonne année* as the Canadians say—and which according to their custom every person in the Fort came to wish me, and the rest of us, this morning. It is a day of great fête, in which the gentlemen hold a kind of levée in the morning, and give a dance in the evening—for the latter I hear the fiddle tuning while I write—and which is the one holiday of the year to young and old. A separate levée or drawing room is held for the ladies in which a laudable custom exists of giving them a kiss in wishing *la bonne année* (this old fashioned salute is general in the country on other cere-

monial occasions). I went manfully round the circle, including two or three old squaws whose only attraction was a clean face, but to estimate the force of that you should see their every day one. After this they have a "régale" of which I must not lower your idea by revealing what it consisted in, but one item is always a glass of wine, if there is any.

Our ball went off with great éclat. Many of the Canadian dances are amusing enough, particularly one called the *Chasse aux Lièvres* which I shall introduce at the first club meeting. There is another also which would be worthy of introduction: it is a round dance in which the parties join hands and one of them sings this stanza which the rest repeat in Chorus, as they dance round the ring—

De ma main droite  
Je tiens Rosalie,  
Belle Rosalie !  
Qui porte la fleur  
Dans le mois de mai,  
Belle Rosalie !  
Embracez [embrassez] que vous voudrez  
Car j'aurai la moitié.

At the last two lines he puts the lady on his right into the circle, they dance round her, at the first pause she gives a kiss to someone (be it observed this is done with the greatest decorum and gravity) then enters the ring again, on the left of the singer; and so it goes round; when he puts a man in it is *beau Rosée* [*Rosier*] The voyageurs have an amusing custom of pressing the gentlemen to dance in such a way as this "Ah! Monsieur, wont you dance, and you shall have my partner!" the lady takes it as a compliment. "Voulez vous pas dancer, et avec cette dame icit" handing to you the lady who has just stood up with himself. We mustered six or eight women to about three times that

number of men, and they enjoyed themselves until about 1 in the morning to an old fiddle and an Indian drum. My corporal exhibited some astonishing steps. We have an addition to our party now in a Mr. McMurray,<sup>33</sup> who arrived here from Great Slave Lake last year. He is a young man educated in this country, at the Red River school, which makes me curious to see what his education amounts to. He had been 12 days travelling on snowshoes to get here for this holiday, for there he is quite alone. Judge of the resources a man ought to possess to pass ten months out of the year without any society, but that of his labourers, within two or three hundred miles. Winter travelling is not considered the hardship one would fancy it; and yet the night before his arrival the thermometer was 30° below zero, a pleasant temperature for sleeping out of doors. The greater part of the men prefer it to remaining at the Forts, and they are employed a great part of the winter in travelling about fetching animals from where the hunters kill and leave them and so on. I hope to make the experiment in March, by going down to McKenzie's river which is a journey of 21 days. They have been building me a cariole, a light sled to be drawn by three dogs; in these one is laced and secured, and there sets upsets at defiance.

We have not much snow here, scarcely a foot at present. My mode of life is this. We breakfast at 9, tea and moose steaks, after breakfast I go to the observ<sup>y</sup> which is a little detached building near to my own room and sometimes see no more of the others until the evening. Sometimes I join them at dinner, which invariably consists of white-fish *au naturel*, i.e. without bread, sauce or vegetable.

<sup>33</sup> William McMurray (d. 1877), later Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company.



Supper the same as breakfast, except that at the latter we enjoy the additional luxury of potatoes, not at the other. After tea I play chess for a couple of hours, and at night either return to the observatory or if I have to get up at 12, I go to bed, in either case spending 12 hours out of every 24 in that sanctum. Thus the days pass wonderfully fast. I can scarcely believe that I have been between three and four months here. These houses are built of logs and are very warm; the fires we indulge in would almost warm a barn. Sunday is a holiday. At Mr. Campbell's request I took upon me the office of reading the service, and do so once every Sunday. We muster about six or seven, the rest of the people are R. Catholics and I am afraid much neglect all religion while in this country. I heard of one bringing in a bottle of Holy water which he procured from the Red River, and his taking the trouble to do so shows that it is more their misfortune than their fault that they neglect the ceremonies of their religion. My dread is to see a R.C. missionary in these quarters. He would make all the half-breeds and many of the protestants of his creed. How can these neglected people draw nice distinctions. It is enough that a man comes and offers to teach them Christianity which they desire to know. If England neglects to make her religion and her Church co-extensive with her Empire, the consequences are hers. The population, of all ages, of the Fort, amounts to about 55. I do not think this country will ever differ much from this condition in which it now is. The difficulties of the internal navigation will always prevent extensive commerce, even if any valuable production, such as minerals,—not bulky,—should be discovered. It can never support a large population, for the greater part of it is a surface of rock without three inches

of soil. I look upon it as an argument against civilization ever being universal, or being of itself a feature of such transcendent importance, that such immense regions are unfitted by nature for the support of a civilized race.

I was disappointed not receiving your letters, they have been enclosed by Riddell in a box, which awaits me at Norway House; as they will not have been superceded by any of a later date, it is of less consequence. I am glad to hear that Anne and McC have enjoyed themselves so much, but do not quite give in to the hope expressed by Fanny or someone else, that they will henceforward travel every year, or agree that they are "just the people for it." "Property has its duties as well as its rights." I do not see what exempts them from a share of the blame which we all agree in the abstract to attach to absenteeism. It would be better in my humble opinion if they remained more at home. If the questions of Irish policies do really come to be tried out by "the last logic of monarchs" every holder of property who is not in the spot to defend it deserves to lose it. All these however are questions out of my line.

I have no directions to give as to future letters, except that they had better be addressed to Toronto, where I trust to be in November at the latest. Give my love and happy New Year to all the family, and believe me my dear Sophie,

Your affectionate brother,

J. H. Lefroy

## X. FORT CHIPEWYAN TO FORT SIMPSON

(A)

Fort Simpson,  
McKenzie's River,  
27 March, 1844.

My dear Sabine,

I think you will be glad to find that I have reached this distant quarter, and not sorry to learn that the latter of the two plans mentioned in my letters of January will be the one adopted. To the  $4\frac{1}{2}$  months of Magnetometer observations at Athabaska will be added two months of them here, and I hope that their value in elucidation of the nature and extent of magnetic disturbances will render that time as valuable as any part of my tour.

I left Athabaska on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March provided with a Cariole and 3 dogs for my own use, and two sledges of 3 dogs for the instruments and provisions. We reached Great Slave Lake on the 8<sup>th</sup> day and arrived here on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, from which two must be deducted for detention, so that the distance was done in 18-19 days, which is very fair progress. We had some very cold weather, the thermometer more than  $40^{\circ}$  below zero more than once; but walking a good deal on snowshoes I did not suffer from cold, and in many respects enjoyed the journey. It was not my impression on coming in to remain for the navi-

gation; that plan is forced upon me by the scarcity of provisions here. I brought beside Henry and self 4 men and 9 dogs; and to keep them here for my return in about three weeks would be to risk starving the whole establishment, for they could barely maintain 4 men and 5 dogs before, (You should see the dogs!) and the time will not admit of their returning to Slave Lake and coming back for me. Nor would this be any great saving of provisions, as they would need a supply for the journey; as it is, in going back they will find just Fish enough in certain Caches along the road to take the party, bipeds and quadrupeds, down. What is called keeping dogs in this country merely means keeping them alive; here they get a fish or two when they work, and when they do not work, if a week or ten days elapses, they get nothing.

I think Carlyle's rule for cases of doubt the best: "Do the duty which is nearest to thee"; and having come to McKenzie's river, the nearest duty appears to be that of making the most of it. It may be long before Magnetometers reach it again. I shall therefore be able now D.V. to descend as far as Fort Good Hope and witness what is described as one of the most magnificent spectacles in nature, the breaking up of ice in this river. It is probable that we may leave it about the 16 June. The Indians are predicting an early Spring from the changes of colour of the animals, but that may arise from the extreme mildness of the month of February, the present month has had quite an opposite character. At all events I shall leave Athabaska before the 10<sup>th</sup> July which will allow time for the whole circuit as before described. I was extremely restricted as to baggage for the journey, as you will suppose, from the small size of the dog sled, and the space required for provisions. I have brought, however,

the Magnetometers, azimuth, Gambey, small sextant etc., and theodolite, a complete equipment in short, and having written by the winter express to the Gentlemen here, have found a building in readiness and shall lose no time in getting to work.

This is a much finer establishment than that of Athabaska, but is one of the poorest in the country in the means of subsistence. The men belonging to it are all kept at a fishing station near the Big Island on Slave Lake. Here there is no fishery. I found Mr. McLean, the gentleman who came up with the Brigade from Montreal, here, waiting to succeed a Mr. Lewis,<sup>34</sup> who had the misfortune to blow his right hand off last September, and quits the country. We shall all go out together as far as Slave Lake, where my canoe will be waiting, and I may gain a few days. Mr. McLean had a curious misadventure in crossing Slave L. to come here very late last season, and narrowly escaped being lost. He kept under sail all one night, having a fair wind at dusk, which wind veered around during the night. The steersman kept "luffing up" suspecting no change, when morning arrived they were out of sight of land, no compass on board, and no sun visible. He lost ten days and narrowly escaped being frozen up, when every man would

<sup>34</sup> John L. Lewes (1791- ?), Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company. In his *Autobiography* Lefroy wrote in detail about Lewes's accident. "It was a terrible accident to happen far from surgical aid, but he had as an assistant a young fellow of nerve and decision, named, I think, Pears, who tried to dress the stump. To stop the bleeding he tied up every vein and artery he could get at; he then bathed the wound with a decoction of epinette, which is much used in the country for external applications; and although much reduced by loss of blood, Lewis's strength of constitution enabled him to gradually recover. His chief suffering at this time was from cold, to guard against which he wore a sheath of warm furs up to the elbow. On the other hand, he entirely lost his neuralgia, from which he had suffered much before the accident."

have perished. I was surprised to find a farm of 13 acres here. They grew last year 140 bushels of barley from  $8\frac{3}{4}$  of seed, and a large crop of potatoes. Cattle they have as far as Fort Norman. All this is entirely a new feature in this country, and adds immensely to the comfort of life here. The Company does not give any direct encouragement to farming although I think it might wisely do so. The gentlemen do it for their own sakes, and without expense to it. Every increase to the productive resources of the country is an increase to the value of the Company's property and interests, while it leaves the native resources more exclusively to the natives. The latter are doing well this winter, rabbits are numerous; but I hear tales of starvation and cannibalism of former winters, especially the last, almost too horrible to be related. Seventy lives were saved at this Fort alone, twelve were lost of families frequenting it. A store of dried fish was brought down from Slave Lake by the earliest navigation, particularly with a view to these appeals. I tried the Inconnu there, but it is far inferior to the Trout. The latter are the best eating in the country in my opinion, although not so well adapted as the white fish to be the exclusive article of food to men for months together. Men do not appear to thrive upon a Fish diet, and have generally a pale, unhealthy appearance.

Mr. Ross<sup>35</sup> at Norway House very judiciously opened the two small boxes sent out by the vessel of last year, and sent me in by the winter express a few of the most portable articles, a Nautical Almanac, Annuaire, Report British Association, letters &c. much to my pleasure and surprise. The Report, I thought, rather less interesting

<sup>35</sup> Probably Donald Ross (d. 1852), fur-trader in service of Hudson's Bay Company for several years in charge of Norway House.

than usual. I was amused by Prof. Leibig's statement that the Indians, living wholly upon meat, would not relish tea, but have found a substitute in Brandy. Tea they are as fond of as any old woman, when they can get it, and Brandy over the greater part of this country, at least, they have done without for several years, to the great advantage of their "systems". But after all the tales we have heard of Indian drunkenness, who would suppose that they never got anything under *six* water grog, never do to this day, on the Saskatchewan, where it is still sold; in fact one person assured me that he has seen them wash out an old cask of that stuff, and pretend to be drunk upon it. The smallest trace of the "milk" is enough for them: fancy does the rest. The general condition of the Indians, their prospects, the bearing of the monopoly upon *their* interests, are subjects which interest me a good deal; and in my sojourn at the different Posts, among different tribes, I of course hear a multitude of instances, anecdotes and opinions bearing upon them. The most interesting feature at the present moment is the strong desire which pervades many of them for Christian Instruction, more particularly the Chipewyan and Beaver Indians. It is much to be wished that our missionary society will bestir itself. It is most unfortunate that at present the principal support of the Company is given to the Wesleyan mission, but solely, I make no doubt, because the Church has neglected the country for fifty years. This department, the "North-west" properly speaking, has been a source of great wealth to England. No missionary has ever yet visited the McKenzie, nor until last year had one crossed the Saskatchewan. The first was a Wesleyan; he passed round by Peace River and Athabaska and held out hopes (which will lead to great

disappointment) that another would come in this spring. No one is coming however. Upon the whole the tone of morals and of feeling generally pervading the H.B. service (Gentlemen) is very highly to their credit; this, I attribute to three causes, climate, esprit de corps, and their solitary life which gives a degree of stiffness and ceremony to their intercourse when they meet, favourable to self-respect.

I believe Dr. Richardson knew the country too well, when he wrote that letter to you, to have very sanguine hopes of my accomplishing many of the objects which he named. In truth I have done next to nothing out of my own line, for I found the burden of magnetic observations fully enough for my time. I have three of Newman's Boiling point Thermometers and shall have a numerous series of observations with them from Lake Superior to Fort Good Hope which cannot differ much in elevation above the sea from Bear Lake, and again along the base of the Rocky Mountains to Edmonton. The Actinometer burst with the frost at Athabaska, as did sundry bottles of mineral waters. I left *en Cache* at the Grand Rapid one or two good specimens of fossil fish, and hope to add considerably on my return to my collection; but the stowage of a single canoe so loaded as mine is, is very limited—a collection of skulls of animals would require a barge. The meteorological observations he was so desirous of having made at various posts are at most of them very imperfectly executed, as must be the case when they are viewed as a task and a bore. A little attention on the part of the Committee at home, of the Geogr. Society, of himself, or any person, or body, in acknowledging communications, however imperfect, would do more to encourage the observers and to draw forth really useful



labour than all the orders and requests of all the wise men in London. This is too much to expect from poor human nature, especially official nature, I confess; but without it I do not believe that co-operation to a useful purpose can be expected in any such cause from strangers and persons not caring a rush themselves about the subjects they are asked to attend to. They had a cold of  $-65^{\circ}$  last winter at Fort Good Hope, for some days. Our lowest at Athabasca this winter was  $-46^{\circ}$ , here  $-40^{\circ}$  only.

Mr. Campbell,<sup>36</sup> a person who is exploring for the Company toward the head of the river Liard, belongs to this department. He is a self-educated man, raised from the Ranks. I saw yesterday a sort of chart of his execution, by compass, variation unknown, starting from Fort Halkett, from which he makes Frances Lake which is his wintering Station 306 miles distant. There will be a collision with the Russians in that quarter again. Very soon, I imagine, he must be close upon if not within their frontier. There are fears for his fate as nothing has been heard this winter from him and he was threatened by famine and the Indians both.

This letter goes out with my returning men, and will reach Canada perhaps a month or so before myself. I say little about business on that account. I thank God that I have enjoyed excellent health, and do not find myself less able to stand the rough work of the country than other people.

My kind regards to Mrs. Sabine and Riddell, and Believe me, my dear Sabine,

Ever yours faithfully

(Sgd.) J. H. Lefroy.

<sup>36</sup> Robert T. Campbell (1808-1894), fur-trader and explorer who discovered the Upper Yukon River in 1848.

(B)

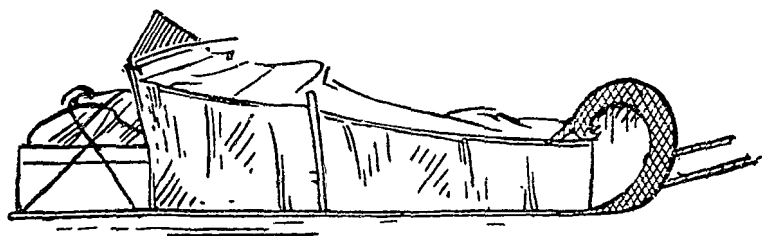
Fort Simpson,  
28<sup>th</sup> March/44

My dear Mother,

I hardly expected, when leaving Canada, to be able to write to you from McKenzie's river, or to extend my journey much more than half way to it; but one's views expand in advancing and here I am at its head, with the prospect of descending nearly to its mouth before reaching the end of my tether. I left Athabasca on the 5<sup>th</sup> March from Great Slave Lake, with three sleds and a cariole, each drawn by 3 dogs, and a party in all of 8 people. Very glad to get quit of the close confinement of my previous winter work, and to enter on to the novelty of a winter journey. It was desperately cold weather for March, as I thought, although we had much colder weather before I arrived here. When I started it was about 20° below zero, but we had it 40° and more below, in the course of the journey—but beautifully fine and clear. I had exercised myself a good deal on snowshoes before starting, and was able to walk several hours without much inconvenience, and this proved fortunate, for the N.C. officer, Bomb<sup>r</sup> Henry, my right hand man, proved a miserable walker and I was obliged to let him ride half of every day. What is called the *mal de raquette* is only one of several acute pains in the feet and legs which a person unaccustomed to snowshoes is liable to suffer. I escaped it, but suffered considerably for the first four or five days from some of the others. On the whole however for a newcomer I have the glory of being considered a good walker. Few conveyances can be more comfortable than a cariole, and when wrapped up in robes or blankets,



with a hood over ones head, it is warm in any weather. It is a narrow sled of thin flexible boards, just large enough for one person to sit or lie down in, the sides high where he sits, like an armchair, and inclosed with parchment. Some people add a cover; mine was open. It narrows towards the feet like a coffin, and the man who drives has a cord attached to each side as he walks behind to put it right when it upsets, which happens very often. A sort of footboard behind carries a box or canteen of necessities.



My way of proceeding was to rise between 4 & 5, take breakfast, get a good warm start about 6 and go on without stopping except for a few minutes at a time until about 5 in the afternoon, when we encamped. Most people start at 2 or 3, breakfast on the way, and encamp much earlier. 10 to 12 hours in either case is the days march. There is a great deal of work in forming a good winter encampment. It is necessary first to take snowshoes and shovel away the snow over a space of about 20 feet, in length, by 9 or 10 in breadth, the fire is made in the middle, of logs which extend the whole breadth, and the ground covered with the young elastic branches of pine, laid like thatch; young pine trees are also cut

down and laid round the sides to form a sort of fence and the sleds and cariole arranged behind these, so that it is pretty well inclosed. All this occupies several hands, especially cutting a supply of logs, and takes about an hour or more. The next thing is to fill the tea kettle with ice or snow and prepare supper. Dried meat and Pemmi-can are the material, and reindeer tongues for a luxury, but the grand luxury is a basin of tea. You will imagine how one enjoys it. I had also a small supply of galettes or biscuits. In very cold weather while one's face is scorched, one's hands in eating get stiff with cold, the fork sticks to the lips; you leave a little tea in the spoon and find it ice; yet one is exceedingly comfortable, the body is never cold, nor the feet, and the face and hands more frequently scorched than too cold. I wore a chamois leather shirt and drawers over my others, which were all of flannel, and a coat or capot of blanket, with a hood to draw over the head, and this dress was amply sufficient for comfort. With socks of blanketing, and Indian shoes, the feet are rarely cold, unless they get wet, and everyone puts on dry socks and shoes every night. I was sometimes prevented from sleeping at night by the cold, but the men, who all lie in one heap, seldom complain of it, and they take it in turn which shall get up to make up the fire, which is never quite burnt out, the rest lie snug up until they hear it blazing.

Amusing scenes take place in the morning in catching and harnessing the dogs. I never saw such profound expression of resignation, dejection and dismay, as they regularly exhibited when called up. No one but Landseer could depict it. At the first outcry, "L'Anglois! Papillon! icit, avance! avance donc l'Anglois!" and so on, some put their tails between their legs and sneak quietly away,

some pretend not to hear, some hide themselves, even to the unhappy animal that obliges himself to be fetched. At last they are all ready; we take a reluctant farewell of the fire, and depart. The dogs do an astonishing amount of work, but differ in strength and spirit quite as much as horses. They are fed at night, but get very little. Nothing is thought of leaving dogs without food for a week or ten days, and if there is any scarcity of fish (they never give them meat except on journeys where it is carried for the sake of portability) they are only fed when they are worked, whatever space may elapse, short of actually starving them to death, for that they are too valuable. We had some mild weather, followed quickly by redoubled cold, for example on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March at daybreak, it was  $+33^{\circ}$ , on the 25<sup>th</sup>  $-41^{\circ}$  a difference of  $74^{\circ}$ . We were 19 days on the march, exclusive of two I spent at Slave Lake.

I found Mr. Maclean the gentleman who came up with me from Montreal here on my arrival (26<sup>th</sup> March) and was very glad to see him again. This is a finer establishment than Athabasca; for the McKenzie river district is the most productive in furs in the North, although unhappily for the Indians and whites too, the least so in animals for food. I was surprized to find not only cattle but a farm of 13 acres here, on which they grow as fine barley and potatoes as I have seen anywhere; but the post is principally dependent for provisions upon the rabbits, and it was the failure of these last winter added to the severity and length of it, which occasioned such a frightful famine as prevailed.

I am going to remain here until the end of May, when they send boats down to the lowest post, Fort Good Hope. These I shall accompany, then, returning, leave the place in June for Athabasca, and thence proceed as I

have already described. I am most thankful for a continuance of good health. I suffered nothing from either the fatigue or exposure of my journey, and have the pleasure of thinking that all I am doing will add to the value of my expedition. It will make me rather later in getting back to Canada than I last expected, but leaves it still possible to effect the whole circuit. As I have often said, I trust on finding numerous letters at Montreal sent out by the Packet of October, and at Toronto by that of November. This letter goes out by the Athabasca boats in June, and will precede me a few weeks perhaps. The letters enclosed by Riddell in his box have been forwarded to me, with some of the contents of the box, the whole being too much, amongst them was your warm comforter for which I am very much obliged to you. I hope to hear of Charles having become two before my return.

With love to all believe me My dear Mother,

Ever your affectionate son,

J. H. Lefroy

(C)

Fort Simpson on McKenzie's R.  
29<sup>th</sup> March 1844.

My dear Anna,

Of all possible books, what would you suppose to be the very last one might meet with in this corner of the world. I think London's *Cyclopedia of Villa and Farm*

*Architecture* is one of the last. Yet here I found it, fresh and new. And this reminds me that Anthony and you are building or having builded a house for yourselves; if you have done so without consulting that work you have done great wrong. I am sure it will be a pretty one, and worthy to be the parsonage of the new church, and shall be curious to hear what it is like; but London gives such drawings and details for everything from a looking glass frame to an Old English front, that nothing remains but to follow or improve upon him as your taste enables you.

I have just written to Mamma a full account of my winter journey here from Athabaska—not omitting to state how cold it was, and that I wore a chamois leather shirt, so I will not repeat these subjects to you. There is much satisfaction in the mere sense of remoteness, a weak one, I allow, but very natural, and this I enjoy in looking at the map and perceiving how nearly the Arctic ocean will be my Point Turn again. It will be Fort Good Hope. By remaining here until the spring too I shall see a sight described as one of the most magnificent in nature. The breaking up of the ice upon this river, before the wonderful rush of water which comes down by the river aux Liards from the Rocky Mountains. It cleaves its way through ice of five feet in thickness as through a sandbank, then tosses it up, piles it, reverses it, almost by acres, with an uproar from time to time, as huge pieces fall, which would deafen Niagara. The river is here more than a mile in breadth, and broader below, with a most rapid current, even above Liard's r. Before the frost is intense enough to fix the whole in a solid mass, in one or two places, for a short space, it never freezes at all. Owing to a greater depth of soil one is surprised to see much

finer timber on its banks than about Athabasca, although so much to the north. Here I see trees nearly 3 feet thick (pines) and they raise excellent crops of barley and potatoes. The Hare Indians who inhabit this country are distinguished from all other tribes by one honourable peculiarity, the women do no labour whatever, the duties of the household are all performed by the men: this cannot be in deference to their charms, for they are the ugliest of mortals, nor for their amiability, for they make no scruple in devouring their husbands and children when pressed by famine. It must proceed from some latent chivalry in the Hare Indian character, which is the more difficult to account for, because this tribe is allied to the Chipewyans, and speaks the same language, although that tribe is remarkable for the brutality with which the females are treated. In truth it would appear that very marked and distinguishing traits in the character and customs of savages may have a modern and local origin, for a third tribe of the same nation, of the same language, in New Caledonia (westward of the mountains) have a custom almost exactly similar to that of the Hindus of burning the widow upon the body of her husband. Except that the husband is equally burnt on the body of his wife, and the burning is not to death, it is but a compulsory roasting, but to a degree of great cruelty. If you can think of any theory to account for these facts, please favour me with it. The great sufferings of the Indians in this quarter for the last three or four years are due to the failure of the animals, large and small, the rabbits, on which they principally depended, from some natural cause, the deer, through their own folly. Five years ago there was a spring of very deep snow and the animals lay





at the mercy of the Indians, they could not escape; yet no arguments or intreaties could make them refrain from killing the young as well as old. An Indian cannot refrain from killing an animal in his power, no matter whether he wants food or not: they nearly exterminated them. Now indeed they confess and lament this folly, but would do the same tomorrow if in their power. Nor can one much blame them, considering what "sportsmen" are nearer home, and the cogency of the argument that if they do not kill, some one else will; however the consequences are very dreadful. This year rabbits are beginning to abound, and they have a prospect of abundance of some time to come, but in the best times, their existence is precarious. It takes but a few days to reduce the strength of a family so much that they can hardly save themselves, even if game offers. I believe that, viewing the Indian population generally, they neither suffer more from want or endure more hardship than any other poor people, and the few who exhibit marked industry never fail to exhibit a marked superiority of condition. It is I think something satisfactory to arrive at this conclusion, to be convinced that nature has no Pariahs, and that wherever we fancy such to exist it is because we judge them by a false standard and measure their condition by feelings which are unknown to themselves. No doubt they are failing but it is exceedingly difficult to get any accurate data for computing at what rate they are diminishing. There is something not a little interesting in my opinion in the fact that any race of men should present an exception to the great law and design of nature in this respect, the deaths in successive generations outnumbering the births; and nothing conveys to me a stronger impression of

Divine purposes within and superintendence in the distribution and progress of our race.

With a few solid books few situations would be better adapted for study and reflection than that of a "winterer" in this country. "The world forgetting, by the world forgot" he has just enough of occupation to relieve the mind, and nothing to hinder study for the remainder of his time. Accordingly I find people frequently to possess information and conversation much beyond what I expected, and here and there instances of self-education to a high degree are met with. Music is rather a favourite pursuit: but still less so than I should have expected. It is of all others the one I should recommend a young man coming to this country to cultivate. I hope little Mary grows and prospers. I very often think of her, and do not forget her when you would most wish her to be remembered, and when I trust my friends remember me. Remember me to Mrs. Wood when you write. My love to Anthony and believe me, My dear Anne,

Your affectionate Brother,

J. H. Lefroy.

(D)

McKenzie's River  
Fort Simpson 29 Apr/44

My dear Isabella,

It's my belief that this is your birthday, and, which is more, that you are 21, *Twenty one*, this day. Can this be true dear Bobbie? I hope my reckoning is wrong. I do

hope you're not 21. What is becoming of us all. Why if the truth were known Anne must be very nearly *forty*, and I am afraid to think how old Sophia is. Be this case as it may, all I can do is to wish you a great many happy returns of it, happier and happier, and my good wishes are not the less warm, from my heart I would say if Englishmen had hearts, for the long flight over land and water, they must take to meet you. What a distance it is, when I look at the map it seems as if it were impossible to get back so far. However I hope D.V. to be in Canada as soon as this letter will be in London.

We are all in expectation now of seeing the ice in the river swept away, twenty days afterwards of starting with the current for Fort Good Hope. The ice of the river Liards came down yesterday morning, and stuck fast at the mouth, opposite Gros-cap, and there it remains, it won't stir, and the great river won't give way: we are imprisoned on our Island, with nothing to do but shoot ducks and geese. I killed two Pintailed ducks this morning at 3 o'clock. They are the most beautiful variety of the wild duck. As for the geese, no sooner does one appear than all the men and boys about the place set up an imitation of their cry, to call them near, and sometimes they are so excessively silly as to fly round and allow themselves to be shot. It is seldom that they return to their summer quarters so early as this; but the snow is almost all gone from the woods, the days are warm, and it is daylight from 3 in the morning until 9 in the evening. All that does not sound like "the inhospitable north". The truth is I am very fortunate; last year everything was much later.

Our society here has a new member in the person of Mrs. Lewis, the wife of the person in charge of the district.

She is the daughter of an Indian woman, and much more of the squaw than the civilized woman herself, delights in nothing so much as roaming around with her children making the most cunning snares for Partridges, rabbits, and so on, and considering that she is rather larger than a certain good friend of mine at home there is an oddity in her activity that is very amusing. She is moreover very good-natured and has given me two pairs of worked mocasins for you; she also gives me lessons in Cree, or rather helps me to form a Cree vocabulary of a few words and phrases which will be interesting for comparison, if I go among the Yakeths and Tchuktchi's on the other side of the water. On the other hand, Nanette, acting interpreter, teaches me Dogrib: pronounce this sentence if you can "Thtan etclà na vgha ochlàhaze?" which Nanette assures me is the proper Dogrib for "combien moy vous donnez pour ça"—what shall I give you for that,—in making a bargain. Now the Crees say with much more elegance "kuqua emerskook?" Nanette is a good looking young woman of about 28, whose eldest daughter at the mature age of 13½, is about to enter holy wedlock with one of the Canadians May 1<sup>st</sup>.

This day two years I was at home. Do you remember standing in the window saying pretty things to the little girls who brought up their garlands? Those recollections make a great impression upon an unfortunate outcast like me. There are no flowers here. It's been snowing all night, and the river is not broken up yet. Little Misere, the rabbit hunter, crossed over to the Fort this morning, but at eminent risk of his neck. Its astonishing what risk they will run upon little or no motive. This is about the season when the Indians gather round the Forts, to subsist upon muskrats, to pay their debts of furs, and to



purchase ammunition for summer expenditure. They come from immense distances upon this last errand, for example from the Coppermine river, dragging behind them a load of dried meat to exchange for it, and nothing but the last extremity of famine will induce them to touch this meat, so that frequently they exclaim on arriving "I am starving, give me something to eat!" at the same time they have a large quantity of provisions on their backs, or on a small sled. This self denial is one of the curious inconsistencies of their character, for on other occasions most of their misery proceeds from the want of it; but it is extremely fortunate for the traders, who otherwise would not be able to get the quantity they require for provisioning their boats. This day twelvemonth I left Canada, with very vague prospects, hardly determined whether to winter or not, and with exaggerated ideas of hardships to be encountered and privations to be endured; and now here I am many thousand miles distant from it, perfectly at home, in better health than when I started, and enjoying all the comforts I want. So little do we know what is before us, and so wise is it, as I believe, not to think about it. I am very thankful for so much good fortune, and trust it will not fail me for the remainder of the voyage.

It is curious how difficult it is to get correctly informed before hand upon local matters in a country like this; it is divided into large districts which have very little communication with one another. Nobody thinks about things which dont concern himself, and at every step I have learnt something that I could not learn before, or unlearnt something in which I was misinformed. At Athabasca I was gravely assured that the Indians had no canoes here, there could not be any birch bark, and that

any plans which turned upon that necessary would be defeated. I was slow to believe it, and find in fact that they have as good canoes as there. It so happened that one of my plans turned upon the question, in solving the great problem of being in more than one place at once I form a good many.

I must tell you that we have some music here. Mr. McLean is a good flute player; as the poor man was a long time at Ungava in Hudson's Straights where he heard but every second year from the civilized world, he had need of some resource. Music is rather less cultivated here than one would expect, but there have been and are some excellent and even first rate musicians in the country; in short a person of good taste and an active mind might pass his time pleasantly enough, and usefully also. It is painful to see the swarms of children growing up at all these Forts in absolute heathenism. No one teaching them one word of Christianity, when the case might be so easily remedied by a system of Sunday school instruction. I don't blame the people for the want of them, in time they may creep in, persons who will patiently bear the brunt of these useful labours are rare enough at home, and the circumstances of their being nominally Roman Catholics,—for the fathers are usually French Canadians—is an obstacle to the exertions of the gentlemen, though they seldom refuse their instruction; and I have heard of several instances of a real desire for it, of a sense that something is needful, and a willingness to receive it come whence it may.

May 16. Mr. McLean and I have been watering the garden with a copper kettle and a bunch of pine branches. Some days of warm and beautiful weather have brought the vegetation so far forward that some of the young

birch buds are burst. You cannot think what a difference in the scene is made when the ice disappears, when the chill, white, uniform surface of the river is exchanged, after six or seven months, for the lively flow of the water, and the reflections and shades cast upon it. It is here exactly a mile broad, but the mouth of the r. Miard is two miles across, diagonally, to the Gros Cap, so that it presents a very fine appearance. The timber on this island is large, some of the trees nearly 3 feet in diam., but on the mainland which is a mere swamp there is nothing of that size. There is a woman here, or rather a girl, called the *Femme du Diable*, because she is the wife of a worthy who bears that name. She was taken away from her husband last year, and guess why, that he might not eat her, as he had eaten his two other wives! being young and tender I suppose he kept her for a *bonne bouche*. One of the other women, called the widow, devoured her own children. The poor creature has human feelings, nevertheless, and weeps bitterly sometimes at the sight of the children of others, playing in the Fort. Are not these terrible events of yearly occurrence a good reason for sending missionaries to them, and giving them the blessing which in their case above all would have "the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come". I think I must get Aunt Harriet to get out begging cards. You may dun your friends for penny stamps, sixpence, old clothes, too, if you like; but dont let Anthony know of it.

The musquitoes are beginning to come about now, not in great numbers as yet, but of an alarming size. They are said to get worse, the farther one goes to the north, but last summer I became at last tolerably indifferent about them. It is the young hands "porkeaters" that they per-

secute the worst. After passing the Portage de la Loche (the great Portage) a man is no longer a "mangeur de Lard", he calls himself "voyageur du Nord, Baptême!" and the very mosquitoes do or ought to respect him. That word looks very like an oath. I'm afraid it is one—but the droll way in which they bring it out, as the climax of a boast, is characteristic of the Frenchman.

My dear Bobbie, while you are young impress this lesson on your mind. There is nothing that you can learn that may not some day be of use. They have been consulting me about making biscuits. All I could tell was to make a paste of flour and water and poke holes in it, but the biscuits produced are like  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. weights and must be broken with a hammer—now we want them for the voyage when time is an object. I am always obliged to allow 10 lbs more to my men when they had one thing, than when they had another, for breakfast. We start for Fort Good Hope on the 25<sup>th</sup> (May) and may expect to be back here by the 12 June. It is short work running down with a current at 3 miles an hour to assist, but every inch of the way back, 500 or 600 miles, must be done by the line, hauling the boat. Good bye.

Ever Dear Bobbie, your affectionate Brother,

May 22<sup>nd</sup>/44

J. H. Lefroy



## XI. FORT SIMPSON TO MONTREAL

(A)

Fort Simpson, McKenzie's R.  
24<sup>th</sup> April 1844  
to  
June 1844

My dear Riddell,

The pleasure I find in writing a letter occasionally to a friend in "the civilized world", as your world is invariably termed in distinction to ours, is always checked by the reflection of the disgust which the said letter will inspire me with if I cast my eye over it before its transmission and after laying weeks in my writing book. I don't know whether you have the same feeling of dissatisfaction with your old effusions. However at present I feel disposed to risk it, particularly as, the observatory being my sitting and sleeping room, Henry's perpetual locomotion at the Term observations, which are going on today, makes me indisposed to do anything else; and to take refuge in the sitting room of either of the other Bourgeois would be a violation of the laws of Society of McKenzie's river. It is a curious thing, to be accounted for, I suppose, by the great dearth of materials for conversation, that the H.B. people at these posts (where there is more than one) are not at all the more social because of their isolation, and generally separate immediately after meals, without any attempt to carry on amusements or

occupations in common. We have however a fair share of conversation, chiefly elicited by the direct process of interrogation on my part, for one of the two elder men (Mr. Lewis) has spent 37 years in various parts of the Northwest, and the other (Mr. McLean) has spent about 24 years, passing between the extremes of Labrador on one side and New Caledonia on the other. Both have descended the Columbia. Mr. McL. is indeed a man of rather superior intelligence and information; he is now amusing himself in reviving his Latin! There are therefore a multitude of points on which an inquisitive person finds means to get information from them. I have also come to a conclusion rather adverse to the general theory, that such solitude as theirs rather refines the mind and the manners, than the contrary. Half the vices which make constrained society often disagreeable on board ship, in garrisons and so forth, are struck out by aggregation, and disappear when the individuals can be taken apart. We have an unusual addition to our party in Mrs. Lewis, a half-breed Cree woman of about 40, larger than anybody I know. She says nothing but is good-naturedly disposed. Does little pieces of work for me, and gives me lessons in Cree; I mean classical Cree, she being from the plains where it is spoken in perfection, the dialect of the other tribes and of the half-breeds generally being a patois. It is the first instance in which I have seen a woman at table; the custom is for the families of those who are married to live apart, the gentlemen, where more than one, being obliged to mess together. We live chiefly upon rabbits as no fish are caught here.

The changes in the bill of fare are rather curious as one goes through the country. At Athabasca moose and buffaloe, here rabbits and reindeer tongues, hereafter,

on Peace river, probably Bearmeat on which they largely depend. then, on the plains exclusively Buffalo. We sometimes get a Beaver here, and contrary to my expectation I find it very good. I suppose you know that in Lower Canada the Beaver is allowed to be "maigre" and fetches a great price in Lent, whenever it is to be got, which is now very rarely. The tail is the great delicacy; with the moose on the contrary it's the nose: these gastronomic details will have great interest for you . . .

Since I began the letter *I have returned from Fort Hope*, the most northerly post but one, in the country; I was very desirous of a Termday there, but we did not make it until the 29<sup>th</sup> May. However I kept half of one by observing the Instr. for about 16 hours, and should have continued for 24, but the weather prevented me. We were but 30 hours there, and if you consider that Absolute Intensity etc. etc. have all to be got into the time, you may imagine there is none to spare. We made the shortest passage there and back on record. We had a gale of wind all the way up, and mounted against a current too powerful for the oar without needing oar or line more than a few pipes. Just after leaving Fort Norman it carried away the mast, and very luckily too, for had the mast not gone, we should have been upset to a certainty. I left on the 25<sup>th</sup> immediately after concluding the Term observ<sup>n</sup>, and got back on the 5<sup>th</sup> June, not in my canoe, which is at Slave L. waiting for the ice to move, but in the Company's boat, which goes down, as I mentioned in my last, every spring. Not having the control of halts I had no opportunities of observ<sup>n</sup>, except at those two posts. Indeed the weather would have prevented it; it was a continual snowstorm, and we never even went on shore except to boil the kettle once a day. We slept every night under

an oilcloth, rain or snow notwithstanding, in the stern of the boat. It is light now all night and in such cloudy weather there is little to distinguish the time of day. The steersman one day when I told him it was 5 o'clock, put the question with a droll hesitation "*cinq heures de demain matin, ou bien cinq heures de hier au soir?*" He actually did not know whether it was morning or evening. I used to joke with him afterwards by asking if it was breakfast or supper he was cooking—"bien Monsieur, je ne sais pas, je suis écarté!" We had some beautiful views of the mountains going down; they approach the river with a labyrinth of snowy peaks and ridges, and I had the good luck to find an enormous recent landslide displaying as fairly as an artificial section the whole thickness of the frozen stratum, which is a matter of considerable interest. It was 45 feet, of which between 1 and 2 only are thawed in the summer. Even at Fort Norman they farm successfully, i.e. grow barley and potatoes. At Fort Good Hope nothing will come to perfection but the turnip. The smallest addition of vegetable food to the fish diet of the country is a great boon. The Bourgeois there is a Canadian, a Mr. Dechambault,<sup>37</sup> actually proprietor of a seigneurie worth about £700 a year, yet he voluntarily remains at that place for the sake of scraping together a little more money to clear off some inconsiderable embarrassment. In fact most of these men forget what society is, their pleasures, hopes, and thoughts, become wholly moulded to their circumstances, and a thousand omissions that a stranger sees, and desirable improvements that strike him, are passed unfelt or un-

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<sup>37</sup> Georges F. Dechambault (d. 1870), clerk in the Hudson's Bay Company.

noticed by them. This Mr. D. is the oddest fish I have seen . . .

Athabasca, July 2<sup>nd</sup>.—I enclose this in the packet of abstracts I am sending off in safe custody. I had more to add, but will write again from Norway House. All I can say for the abstracts is that they are correct copies—but the means require examination.

Believe me.

Ever yours sincerely,

J. H. Lefroy

(B)

Pie Fort, Lake Superior.

18<sup>th</sup> October, 1844.

My dear Isabella.

Two whole days have I been detained in this little corner, waiting for the wind to go down, and allow the waves to do the same, and there they are, still roaring and dashing over the rock, in a manner which for fresh water waves is positive impertinence. I have just been down to see when we shall go to Toronto. Louis does not know, nobody knows. "Ah Monsieur, pas capable!" Louis is an Iroquois and does not speak much French. I like him better than his predecessor Laurent, because he's more active, cheerful, and of finer bearing. Many of the Iroquois are nature's gentlemen but it is a great mistake to consider all the Indians so: men living in a state of want and dependence, squalid, ill-clothed, and without energy to improve their condition, cannot be possessed of the qualities which go to form our ideal of the Indian character.

However, I did not take this sheet to discuss that knotty

point, but to thank you, dear Bobbie, for your two letters received with so many others some weeks ago at Cumberland House—and I do this now in anticipation of a fresh debt at Toronto, whenever I have the happiness to find myself there. I dare say you will suppose that standing upon the threshold of the civilized world again, I must be excessively impatient to reenter it, and excessively vexed by detention. Very far from it. Travelling is becoming a bore now, and I shall be glad when I come to anchor at home; but otherwise, so wonderfully light and insubstantial are the exclusive pretensions of that same civilized world when seen from a distance and in their proper colours, that it would cost one very little indeed to go back to the North, or stay here. I have no friends at Toronto, plenty of acquaintances, but no one whose society offers me the kind of pleasure in returning, which I should enjoy were I going to England instead. I am not intimate with anyone there, not even with Younghusband, without which there is no confidence and without confidence, no friendship. This is a pleasant lively kind of a discussion. You will begin to think I have grown misanthropical, so to change the subject I will turn to your own notes. Alas, all your expectations of sketches from me, conceived as they are in that beautiful blindness which overlooks the notorious fact that I cannot sketch, are doomed to disappointment. I have four or five attempts and beginnings only. I am rather proud of one of them, the rest I shall beg you to make drawings of for me, but the most beautiful subjects I was obliged to pass from inability or want of time. One of them was the crossing of the Assiniboine river, from the Fort of the same name. It is a tremendously rapid river. We passed over the baggage in a log canoe, then we had to get the



horses across, wild animals not backed for months, never shod or trimmed, tails, manes and forelocks as long and wild as you can conceive. There was a very steep high bank which we drove them down, and once at the waters edge, one by one made them plunge in, some of them plunging, rearing, trembling, trying by all possible means to escape. There was an Indian woman with her long black hair as loose and wild as theirs brandishing a great stick behind them, with all the dogs and boys, with every kind of noise. Ho! Ho! Hurrah! Ho! Ho! until we got them all in. Ho! is a peculiarly Indian cry. "Lady Jane" probably would not understand it — here it goes a long way. Once in the water they sink until little but the head is visible, and so swim in groups across, drifted down a long way by the force of the current. I rode one of these animals an hundred miles with nothing but a thong tied to his lower jaw. Though scarcely at all broken in, these horses are good tempered, perfectly free from vice, and much more easily managed than an equal number of our own. They are terribly persecuted by the wolves. At Edmonton, where they are obliged to keep their horses in the woods, and at a distance, for fear of the Blackfeet, they lose from one to two hundred every year by them. To do justice to such a scene as I have described a man should have the pencil of Landseer. In the course of my journey this year I have found more to admire in the scenery of the country than I did last year, perhaps partly because my mind was more at ease, and because we were favoured by weather in some places where it was bad before. Beyond all doubt, however, the first is the great reason for the greater or less pleasure afforded by nature, and it affects one who travels alone particularly. I never felt so strongly before, as I have sometimes done in my journeyings, the extent to which a

cloud upon the mind, of whatever cause, will obscure one's perceptions of what is beautiful, unseen perhaps itself, but made sensible when its effect is over. I think you had none at Jersey by the terms in which you describe it. I was glad to hear of that excursion; it must have been exceedingly pleasant, particularly with Julia as an addition to the party. I must have a laugh at her about *Captain* Leprieux. How could you impose upon her so, she calls him a gentlemanly old man, the truth being that he is much younger in the regiment than myself; but as I recollect him, which is not very distinctly, he is just the sort of a person to pass for any age. I am glad Anthony's church is not thrown into the shade by that at Dogmersfield. One does not like to be put out of conceit of a favourite object, but you must do me a sketch of it, will you? of the same size as Caroline Palmer's sketch of Ewshott church. I have several ambitious designs for decorating my house if I remain a whole year in Canada, last time, I felt less interest in it. Poor Younghusband has escaped the jaws of matrimony which threatened him, and tells me he fervently trusts not to spend another winter alone.

Do you remember asking me to write you some verses, all for yourself, subject not specified. I don't wish to pass for a writer of namby pamby, nevertheless I have made an effort for this once, and to gratify you, and now shall turn my Pegasus out. The lines were concocted in leaving Lake Winnipeg.

On quitting the neighbourhood of the missionary establishments. Lake Winnipeg. Sept<sup>r</sup>. 1844.

## I

Fast fails the Northern Sun,  
His brief bright course is run,  
The chills of winter hover o'er the scene,



And Summer's courtier train,  
Have left the woods again,  
Where Echo slumbers in her leafy screen.

## 2

The treacherous Lake is passed,  
No more the stormy blast  
Can stay the progress of our frail canoe,  
Nor can the friendly sail,  
Filled by a rarer gale,  
Lighten the labour of her joyous crew.

## 3

Tis past! yet turn and mark  
Before our lonely bark  
Break the last spell her living presence gave,  
How still, how bright, her bays,  
Steeped in the mellow haze,  
Mirror their beauty in the glassy wave.

## 4

See! in her sleep she calls to birth,  
Another heaven, another earth.  
More soft, more fair, yet shadowing this,  
Aping, how many a dreaming heart,  
That acts the same self flattering past,  
To deck the fancied Eden of its future bliss.

## 5

Kind Autumn lingers still,  
On yonder russet hill,  
Ere the grim giant of the North appear,  
And with a gentle care,  
As wrinkled Eld were there,  
Flings her gay mantle o'er the dying year.

## 6

Still as her path we trace,  
With sad averted face  
We find her gliding o'er the sleeping land.  
And from th'uncultured wild,  
In sorrow sweet and mild,  
Staying the bounty of her open hand.

## 7

Why from this favour'd spot  
Now doth she hurry not?  
What wins her feet to linger here awhile?  
And why on yonder height,  
Stays she her southern flight,  
To greet the prospect with a sweeter smile?

## 8

An Harvest field is there,  
The scattered seed is prayer,  
Sculs are the treasure to the garner borne,  
The fence around is Love,  
Faith is the light above,  
And Peace the garland by the reapers worn.

## 9

Bright as the chequered shade,  
In Autumn's tints arrayed,  
Decks the glad earth, and glories in the light,  
There is a brighter sign,  
A promise more divine.  
Where the Cross rises in the gladdened sight.

## 10

No more oblivion's wing  
Its mournful shade shall fling  
O'er the last records of a failing race.  
Nor shall the silent tomb,  
As to their only home,  
Woo the poor remnant to its dread embrace.

## 11

Lo! from the household fire,  
 Three spectral forms retire  
 That ever hover near the wandering hearth,  
 Pale Sickness, iron Want,  
 Fell Famine, ever gaunt,  
 The dark attendants on the Indians' path.

## 12

And with the name of Home.  
 What kindly graces come,  
 See Woman's form erect, her gladlier brow.  
 And new lit in her eye  
 Its holiest dignity  
 To "cheat the toil, and cheer the way" below.

## 13

To cheat the toil, and twine  
 Around Love's purest shrine,  
 Lost Eden's amaranth, with flowers—[MSS damaged] earth  
 In blessing day by day.  
 Along life's thorny way,  
 Teaching the secret of his Heavenly birth.

Nov. 1844

Something appears wanting to complete them, but Apollo wont help me any further; besides, as they are all for you, it is but fair that you should put the finishing stroke to them yourself if you are not contented. I was very nearly cured of amateur verse making by a young clerk, Barney Ross, whom I think I must have mentioned last summer. He inflicted upon me a quire of his own compositions, begging to know which I liked best. You never saw such stuff. Barney is a young Irishman, one of our party from Montreal, and particularly allotted to me as a sort of assistant if I required his services.

I had a very pleasant season from Lake Winnipeg to Lake Superior, one or two very wet days excepted, and we did not lose our way this time. So you dont quite understand what a Portage is. I thought of that as we were in one called the Portage François; it would have made the matter very clear. A Portage, be it known to you, is a break in the navigation, caused by a waterfall, an impassible rapid, or anything else, as for example by two Lakes having no water communication with one another. When we arrive at such a place, the canoe is unloaded, taken out of the water, carried across by land, by two of the men, and then the loading carried over to it. Now some of these portages are one or two miles long; there is one of twelve miles. The canoe weighs about 400 lbs, and two men have to carry it on their shoulders. I have a box weighing 100 lbs. Someone has the pleasure of carrying that, and so of everything. 180 lbs. is considered a full load, if compact. They have to go and return as often as necessary until every thing is carried. Judge then if a portage is any joke. This P<sup>g</sup>e François is one of the very worst, about 2 miles long, several hills, and several wet swamps to cross. It was perfectly dark when we carried the second load, and we had to grope our way among the tall Pines entirely by the feel. I always carry something, more indeed than most gentlemen in this country, for the sake of example, and because I have many small separate packages requiring constant care and watchfulness. We enjoyed supper that night under the beautiful starlight, in a space at the end that was pretty clear. However all these little matters you may read more at large in my Journal if you like — I have finished my sheet.

Ever dear Isabella Your affectionate brother

J. H. Lefroy

(C)

En route, Lake Superior  
22nd October 1844.

My dear Fanny,

I take advantage of being detained by foul weather, to thank you for your two letters of November and March last, which I received together at Cumberland House, about the end of August. I hope to find more at Toronto. You cannot think how happy I was to hear tidings of little Kate, and read your description of her. Every one gives such a pleasant account of her, even Anne, whose love for children is I think not a very prominent passion. And your honest and impartial description was just what one wants, and the best reflection of maternal happiness I ever met with. It happened oddly enough too, that my friend Mrs. Barney sent me a something similar picture of her little daughter, a godchild of mine, just at the same time; I think one of her terms, "violet eyes" quite poetical. I thought of you a short time ago in calling on the wife of one of the missionaries, a very pretty, interesting young woman, a half-breed, but as fair as a European. I paid the visit with another missionary's wife, and she brought out for us her little child. It was but a fortnight old, and was packed up in that peculiar Indian fashion which I think so excellent. It was so neat and compact, about fourteen inches long, unlike an ordinary baby, which may be put in ones arms and one does not know which end one has hold of, or which is baby and which petticoat. It was made to hang up, or set upright, and I was really praised for the skillful manner in which I handled it. I have tried to give you a sketch of the sort of figure above. The outside case is made of cloth, lacing up in front, and ornamented with beads and embroidery; the inside stuffing is a soft silky

moss, very abundant in this country, so that nothing can be so economical.

It is a happy thing when the budget of nearly a year's news contains so many pleasurable and so few painful items as I found in mine: the year seems to have been a happy one for every one in the family unless Maxwell be the exception, which I trust not to find the case, and one which like its predecessor for a long time should fill our hearts with thankfulness for being spared the distresses and afflictions which we see so many around us suffer under. I read Rickard's Welsh report, which was very interesting. What must we think of the wisdom with which the world is governed when such contemptible abuses could be suffered for months to keep England in alarm. I saw in some newspaper the scriptural origin of the term Rebecca, which seems to have been more wittily chosen than John Bull's nicknames usually are.

Now to come to my own history, I think I wrote to you last from Athabasca. I won't give you the details of a day's routine there, as you request, because I think I gave them to someone during the winter, and you may probably have read the letter; neither will I describe my long winter journey to McKenzie's river, 21 days, the thermometer sometimes 40° below zero, because I wrote about that to Mamma. I must start from Fort Simpson, where I passed my time from the end of March to the middle of June, very differently, in minor matters, from that at Athabasca. As the Spring advanced, day and night became almost the same thing, revolutionizing all the habits formed for the short winter days, and so suddenly that one felt as if some unaccountable change had taken place, one could not tell what. The further one goes to the north, the more beautiful and intoxicating is the burst of Spring. Every one is



seized with a passion for being out of doors, the very washerwoman used to go with the tubs and encamp, as they called it, in the thicket outside; and I used to stumble on that indefatigable creature, Nanette, in all sorts of corners. in a curious black straw bonnet she had, of the fashion of the year one, with immense red bows on it, talking Dogrib and bad French, as if her tongue was just unthawed. Nanette was acting interpreter, and always had two or three Indian squaws and girls about her. It was not until the latter end of May that the river was free from ice, and as long as that remained, the change from the winter was but half perfect although the snow was gone, and the trees were budding long before. I used to get up at 3 every morning, it was quite daylight, and after making my first observation of the Instruments, take out a gun to a small pond behind, and see if any wild fowl had alighted there on their way northwards. We took breakfast at 8, a party, of 6, which is a very unusually large one for this country, but there were two young clerks at the Fort, as well as two commissioned traders. Mrs. Lewis, a half Indian woman, made the fifth. We lived better here than at Athabaska, in particular were not so much limited in the article bread, that is to say, galettes, the substitute for it. We had just three times the allowance, yet it was only then a secondary item on the table, and eaten as a luxury. I got quite accustomed to living wholly upon meat, and am inclined to think it hardens the frame to do so, and makes one less sensible to cold. We had a luxury upon the breakfast table sometimes, which was never seen in Leadenhall market, Beavertails, and with pounded reindeer meat to mitigate its richness, there is nothing so good. A beaver tail is about 9 inches long, and broad, a large one will weigh nearly a pound: it consists entirely of a firm rich

fat, free from the rather rank taste of the animal itself. The vertebra, which are immensely large, take up an unfair portion of it, but still, one of them, with etceteras, is almost enough for a man's breakfast. After breakfast I used to occupy myself in the observatory until dinner. I lived there, and had my bed in a sort of berth in one corner close along side of my beloved magnetometer. Sheets are a luxury I have seen but once since I left Montreal. I think I have once been indulged with them, but to my shame be it spoken, I have quite forgotten who gave me such a magnificent reception. Rabbits are the staff of life on McKenzie's river. We almost always had them for dinner, with reindeer tongues; in short we lived like lords, particularly while the geese and ducks were passing, and for two or three weeks there was a stream of them. The Canada goose or bustard, has the weakness always to come back when it is called. I have seen them do so after having been shot at once. The call is an imitation of its own cry, a very discordant one. I cannot do it at all myself, but most of the natives can to perfection, and the appearance of one at a mile off was a signal for this outcry to be set up in every possible note and key by every man, woman and child who saw it. I cannot convey in description a sense of the singularity and novelty of these things, trifling as they were, or of the contrast which was always presenting itself, between all that formed the then environment of one's outward being, and the things to which it was previously accustomed.

Went down to Fort Good Hope at the end of May. It was the limit of my travels, and from the time I turned my back on it, I have had the consolation of feeling on my way home. The Rocky Mountains are very plainly seen towards the lower part of the river, a broken labyrinth of





ridges and peaks, all covered with snow, and glittering in the sun. Nothing can exceed the softness and beauty of the twilight in those regions. The sun at Fort G.H. on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May was below the horizon about three hours only. I wrote a letter at midnight in the boat, as we glided quietly down the stream. It was so unlike one's idea of the North, the "mitternacht" or midnight, as the Germans call it, a proverb for all that is gloomy and desolate; yet 't is but a fleeting charm, and winter in these poor countries has in truth horrors that can hardly be exaggerated. I could tell you such stories of starvation. We had a woman at Fort Simpson, a sort of pensioner and hanger on, who eat her husband and some of her children only the winter before. She was childless, and sometimes the sight of children at play would throw her in a fit of crying, which showed that human feelings are not extinct in those who are driven to enact such shocking scenes. We had another, a young woman there, protected from a different motive. She was taken away from her husband for fear he should eat her, he being a known cannibal. (I am not telling fibs) I only know her by the name of the *Femme du Diable* — that worthy, her husband, bearing that name.

Now, my dear Fanny, I must interrupt the course of my story a little, to grumble. Did any one ever hear of such weather. I have been 8 days coming twelve miles, and it has been thundering, lightning, and raining all night, as if it were August. It is about 60 or 70 miles to Michipicoten; by the rule of three, when shall we get there? — never, for our skeletons will be found about the Otter's head, mine looking quite natural, and all our leather shoes eaten for famine. We have but three or four days provisions left — when shall we get to the Sault? When shall I get to Canada? We were exceedingly near being

swamped a day or two ago, in greater danger than I have ever before been, but I have not time to describe how, now — I shall be safe D.V. when you get this — Meanwhile give my kind regards to Rickards and believe me, my dear Fanny, ever your affectionate brother.

J. H. Lefroy

Toronto — 19<sup>th</sup> Nov. P.S. — arrived last evening — thank you my dear Fanny for your letters of July and Sept<sup>r</sup>.

(D)

Toronto

20<sup>th</sup> November 1844

My dear Mother,

It much delights me to write to you again from this place and acquaint you with my health and safety. My return was protracted to so late a period, that you might have entertained apprehensions of one or the other. I arrived at Penetanguishene on the 14 Novem<sup>r</sup> and found myself here on the 18<sup>th</sup>. This route is shorter than that by the Ottawa; but my reason for adopting it was that so late in the season one is liable to be frozen up in the small lakes upon the other line, and even in Lake Huron, where the water is excessively shallow and much crowded with small islands which shelter it from the wind, one may be easily stopped by one or two nights of severe cold. We had plenty of snow, but mild weather — wet snow makes the worst encampment of all. I found here a number of letters, of dates June, July and Sept<sup>r</sup>. I have not had time even to read them all yet, but I start tomorrow for Montreal, and shall take them to read on the road. Some of my letters are there.

You have no idea what trouble I had with my men between Penetanguishene and Toronto. French Cana-

dians are seldom met with in this province. I had two, both half-breeds, and one Iroquois, the other three who formed my crew were sent back from Penet<sup>ne</sup>. In spite of all I could do people would give them liquor, and they arrived at Toronto singing French paddling songs all up the streets, so that I heard them half a mile off, and so all the way up our avenue to the observatory — just as they were accustomed to do on arriving at a Fort — this and their out-of-the-way dress, not to include my own, made my entry a very public one. It was late when we reached the obs<sup>y</sup> — about 8 or 9 o'clock. I was thankful indeed to enter it again, and much delighted with the reception I met with from Younghusband and from the N.C. officers. I have not yet called upon anyone. I packed my men off the very next day, yesterday; and by good luck, Mr. Dease,<sup>28</sup> the companion of Simpson, who knew old Louis, the noisiest, was going the same way, and it was a pleasure to him to meet old voyageurs again. He will look after them down — for they did not speak English, and knew no more in what part of the world they might be in than if set down in China.

I have written a good many letters of late, and have but little time now, there are several that I must write, on business. I have been travelling from Penet<sup>ne</sup> with a very pleasant and rather singular person, a Mr. West. He is a young man, of very good family with a good deal of money, fond of the seas and whose business it is to go all over the world, uniting as much pleasure as he can, with Mercantile speculation and business. He has been everything, owned land in several of the Australian Col-

<sup>28</sup> Peter Dease (1788-1863) was at one time a Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company. From 1836-1839 he explored the Arctic Coast from the mouth of the Mackenzie River to Point Barrow with Thomas Simpson.

onies and in New Zealand, traded in China, buying vessels here and there, and selling them again, in short turning a penny in any way that offered — even to driving flocks overland of which Grey<sup>39</sup> talks so much — and acting as land surveyor. He is therefore a great authority about matters connected with Maxwell's proceedings. He thinks but little of China, *unless* M. learns Chinese, which is not spoken by six Englishmen, he affirmed, in China. The capital of the leading Chinese Houses is so enormous that nothing can be looked for from the employment of any capital he can ever hope to command. He does not think that any very promising opening exists, for mere talent. With respect to Australia, he gives a very unfavourable account of all the Colonies, but West Austr. is the best. I will not however at present go into this subject, not having read Maxwell's last letters, or taken time to consider it. I may be able to write from Montreal by the present mail, but do not feel certain.

You mention an intention of paying me the £600 you borrowed. I should wish to have that sum with the £200 remaining in Charles hands, remitted to me here. I can, I believe, get 6 percent for it, upon perfect security, and shall still have a balance with Cox of about £150. Thanks to the economy of travelling at the public expense, I am about £300 to the good by my journey; but then I shall be put to future expense, in consequence. I am much pleased to hear that the letting of Ewshott is postponed for the present, not only in the hopes of finding it still home, whenever I return, but because I can enter perhaps more than formerly into the feelings you must all have in leaving it. A new and thriving country like this, teeming with

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<sup>39</sup> Sir George Grey (1812-1898). Governor of South Australia.

discontent and vain regret, amidst abundance, impresses upon me very strongly the truth that the least things in our daily course of life take often the deepest root—and that those words of our Lord's "the life of man consisteth not in the abundance of those things that he possesseth", contain, if we may use such an expression, a very deep Philosophy. I much wish to see the alterations of Ewshott external and internal. more particularly the first, which I least understand. Now I have so much writing to get off hand that I must close my letter—My love to all, and believe me,

Ever your affectionate son,

J. H. Lefroy

I ought to tell you that the verdict of the few friends I have seen is, that I am looking extremely well, and one or two have gone so far as to say that I am looking *stout*.

(E)

Rascoe's Hotel  
Montreal.

Monday 25<sup>th</sup> Nov<sup>r</sup>  
1844

My dear Younghusband,

Conceive the annoyance of finding that those men of mine have not made their appearance, consequently the letters I sent by them and the papers necessary for the arrangement of my account have not been received. It seems that they gave Mr. Dease the slip at Kingston, and I must wait here, doing nothing, until they arrive.

I have found two letters from Riddell Oct 9 & 17, none from Sabine, who was enjoying a holiday at Scarborough. Riddell must have written to you by the same mail. By the next, which is not yet delivered here, we shall learn

what has been done at the British Association meeting. He mentions the latest refinement, a very good one—making the magnetom<sup>r</sup> boxes, and the meas<sup>r</sup> scales for Deflection, of *slate*, which is scarcely at all affected by changes of temperature. I suppose they mean to retain a copper box inside, but he says nothing about it. I dined at mess today, three sappers, one Artill<sup>r</sup>, exclusive of Burn. I cannot be back by the first of the month, for the steamers are about to stop running. It is here very cold, th: 17° on Sunday. We had Sir Allan MacNab,<sup>40</sup> and about a dozen other members in the boat, mostly of the radical party; and as we were delayed all night at the Couteau du Lac they got up a little debate of their own—the fun was, as several of them were in bed, to hear a strong opinion from one honourable member or another from berths, nobody knew whose. I never laughed so much. The Speaker, Sir Allan, was eloquent in a bottom berth on one side, and Mr. Thompson,<sup>41</sup> a radical, was heard from behind some red curtains on the other. Mr. Small,<sup>42</sup> another radical, kept on his legs. They were all in good humour. I did not learn anything from them, as to the strength of the two parties.

I must tell you the pleasure I had in reading your own note of the 14<sup>th</sup> because I much value every expression of your kind feeling and regard, and owe to you and others of my friends the best and most heartfelt reward of exertions, well intended, whether well directed or not, that of

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<sup>40</sup> Sir Allan Napier MacNab, Bart. (1798-1862), Tory leader in Canada and Prime Minister, 1854-1856.

<sup>41</sup> Possibly David Thompson (d. 1851), member for Haldimand in the Legislative Assembly of Canada.

<sup>42</sup> James E. Small (d. 1869), member for York in the Legislative Assembly, Solicitor-General in the first Baldwin-Lafontaine ministry (1842-1843).



finding them fully, (in my case much too fully) appreciated by those whose opinions are alone of any value in such a matter. I hope we shall both live and work together long enough to add much, both to our ties of personal friendship and to our claims to be well considered in the Regiment as men truly maintaining its character, and in the world of science as jealous labourers in a field of real interest.

Believe me, my dear Younghusband

Yours with very kind regard

J. H. Lefroy

## XII. BACK IN TORONTO

(A)

Toronto  
10 Decem. 1844

My dear Riddell,

I must not permit another mail to pass without thanking you for your many letters received since you last heard from me. Letters Jan<sup>y</sup> to April, rec. in Aug. at Cumberland House, and of Oct<sup>r</sup> 2 & 18 found here.

A comparison of the obs<sup>ns</sup> at Athabaska and Fort Simpson will give rise, I think, to an interesting question, whether the great increase in the fluctuations of every description there observ<sup>d</sup> is due to the change in the Magn<sup>e</sup> Latitude or to the great and sudden increase in the sun's influence in those high Latitudes, on the first burst of Spring. I incline to the latter opinion, and if it is borne out by them, I mean, that if it is known that all those influences are of solar origin, those obser<sup>ns</sup> will be a very striking illustration of the fact. As I explain<sup>d</sup> to Sabine, I am without a copy of those Abstracts, and the original has been left inland. I hope you will be able to return me the sheets, or a copy. You must at all events have them copied into the printed forms before you can do anything with them.

I wrote a long letter to you from Norway H. dated Sept<sup>r</sup> which must have arrived at York F. too late for the vessel. I will incorporate as much of it, as is worth it, in





this. It can scarcely be necessary to give you any sketch of my route since leaving Athabasca. It was up Peace River, across by land to Lesser Slave Lake, thence by water to Fort Assiniboine, thence by land to Edmonton where I arrived 18<sup>th</sup> August. We had very unfavourable weather about that time, which both delayed me and impeded observation. I could not get a glimpse of the sun at Edmonton for two or 3 days. Upon the whole it is a matter of surprize to me how little my observ<sup>ns</sup> were impeded by weather. This is partly owing to one's being always in the open air, and prepared to seize an opportunity the moment it is offered.

I had a very pleasant voyage down the Saskatchewan and one adventure which gave me some amusement at the time. The plains Indians are in a state of warfare, and there is a certain degree of danger in a single boat or canoe passing through their country. The travelling war parties are not respecters of persons, and would scalp the illustrious Gauss<sup>43</sup> himself, if so disposed. By way of defense we carried some old musquets. However we arrived at Carlton without danger, saw a few buffalos and deer, and plenty of wolves but not one Indian; for they were all away in another direction. A few miles below Carlton the thick woods commence, where danger is at an end; we therefore left our musquets there, and went on without arms, excepting what belonged to me and the Guide. That evening, an hour or so after sunset, as we were pulling quickly down the stream, which is there very rapid, we were hailed from the dusk of the opposite bank, in Assiniboine or Blackfoot, by some party which had encamped

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<sup>43</sup> Karl Friedrich Gauss (1777-1855). German Mathematician who, along with Archimedes and Newton, is considered as one of the three greatest mathematicians in history.

without a fire. This is always a circumstance of suspicion with Indians; we made no reply, but kept on, inclining a little to the other shore. Three or four miles lower down, it being then quite dark, we halted to cook supper, in a thicket on the top of a high bank. Well, while the supper was cooking—it was a beautiful kettle of buffalo humps and tongues—I heard a faint singing noise in the distance, and was listening to it and wondering what it could be, when it seemed to become louder and nearer and caught the ears of the men who being engaged had not heard it so soon. “*Les Assiniboines! les Pieds noirs! Embarquez, M. Lefroy. Embarquez!*” they cried out at once, and seizing the kettle they tumbled down the bank with incredible expedition. I followed them, and we pushed off. All this made some noise, and when we lay on the oars to listen, in the middle of the stream, there was dead silence for the moment, then a loud outcry of wolves and dogs. Now this is so common a stratagem of the Indians that we felt convinced it was from a party of them, and this suspicion was confirmed by the circumstance that not far above, without seeing or hearing anything we had all perceived the smell which proceeds from a large assembly of horses. It was too dark to distinguish any objects on the bank. It is rather unusual for Indians to range so low but some Assiniboines arrived at the Fort while I was there, and a war party of 50 Blackfeet had left it about a fortnight only. It probably was a party of Indians, but whether we had the remotest grounds for running away, is another question. The men were in such a panic, and have such a dread of the plain tribes, that I could not have stopped them. I asked Baptiste if he thought the savages wanted to cut his throat. “*Je ne sais pas, Monsieur. Je ne serai pas le premier homme*

qu'ils ont servi de même!" which was the most prudent view of the case at all events.

We never encamped going down that river, but cooked supper, embarked, and drifted all night with the stream, keeping one man to lookout and steer. It was generally beautiful weather, and I enjoyed no part of the voyage more. A boat is a far more comfortable thing than a canoe. We had excessively bad weather on Lake Superior, the gales of October, which were severely felt over the greater part of this country, kept me prisoner for ten days, and it was only by favour of an unusually mild season which followed that I was enabled to reach Canada at all. Generally Lake Huron becomes frozen up, within the islands, early in Nov<sup>r</sup>. I got to Penetanguishene on the 14<sup>th</sup>. We had some severe cold before the great gales set in, and had the weather continued calm, would have been stopped by it. The Therm<sup>r</sup> was nearly down to zero two or three nights. I have just now returned from Montreal where I had to go to settle accounts with the H.B.Co. and am fairly settled down to the work of the observ<sup>y</sup>. I think Younghusband much improved in habits of application since I left Canada, and in other respects his engagement of marriage, which I suppose you know, since it is no secret, has had a good effect upon him. He forswears sack and lives cleanly, and is economizing with all prudence. We are much in arrear of work, and I see no way of getting rid of the burden, but by engaging temporary assistance for the mere writing and addition . . .

The new slate boxes and bars you allude to, are an admirable idea. I should fear the marks on the scales if too deep, not being accurate enough, if too fine, getting dim and invisible. I have a long letter from Wilmot of July, after a silence of three years. Poor fellow! I never

met with circumstances more distressing than those he has been labouring under, and his extreme sensitiveness and delicacy of feeling made them doubly painful. I am not at all surprised at his determin<sup>n</sup> to leave the Cape at the end of /45. When he went out, he always declared he would not remain over the given time; and the great discomfort of his circumstances would have driven him away long ago, but for a principle of Duty. Kay of Van Dieman's Island, has sent me a most amusing epistle. He declares that the many inconsistencies of the various orders and instructions he received drove him mad, and he laboured for a long time under a species of magnetical insanity, which was greatly increased when the wrong Pole of a magnet was presented to him: his date is June /43.

I shall be curious to hear what is arranged about Ross's<sup>11</sup> northern voyage. Of course it will not take place until after this congress of magneticians, which I should like much to attend, as candlesnuffer, or in any other capacity. I postpone, until after the same event, any future voyages of mine to the Northwest. If Ross winters within the arctic circle, I presume a winter inland again will be desirable. The necessary repairs to my Instruments can hardly be made in time to return next spring, even if it were wanted. I know of no circumstances in which the Theod. Magn<sup>r</sup> would be valuable on grounds of portability alone. so as to make it worthwhile to add it to a set complete without it. Before I start again, I shall arrange the three magnetometers in one box, which will be a great con-

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<sup>11</sup> Sir James C. Ross (1800-1862), who, in 1829-1833, accompanied his uncle Sir John Ross to the Arctic and discovered the magnetic pole. 1831.

venience for storage and carriage—and will not make it at all inconveniently heavy.

Believe me My dear Riddell,

Yours very sincerely,

J. H. Lefroy

(B)

Toronto, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1844.

My dear Sophia,

I am much delighted to hear that you have met with some persons who take an interest in the painful state of religious destitution which prevails over a large part of the Northwest, and sit down now to endeavour to fulfil your wish to know what can be done to relieve it. Since my letter to Anthony, I have had better opportunities of observing the state of the case than I had had when it was written, and as respects one important feature in the case, have corrected the opinion I then expressed. I mean as to the want of the means of obtaining lawful marriage; for it appears that the absence of the ceremony has been repeatedly held at law as no barrier to the legality of the union, and is therefore none to its moral innocence inasmuch as the ceremony cannot be obtained. In other respects I believe my subsequent experience has only confirmed what I then stated, and has given me many more illustrations of it. To go fully into the subject would almost require a tract. However I will recapitulate as shortly as I can the state of the case, and give you the result of my own reflections upon it.

The whites in the North are too few in number, and too much scattered about in small communities, which may be looked upon as large isolated families, to be reached by any machinery intended primarily for their

benefit. They must be the secondary object, and the Indians the first; and I fear that at all times the influence of the Priests over the Roman Catholic portions, while it does them not the slightest practical good, will be strong enough to prevent them from getting good from others. The most obvious way to make Christians of the rising generation of halfbreeds would be to establish a Sunday School, conducted by the trader himself, at every Fort—but one might as well propose to found a Greek professorship at every Fort. I met with one or two gentlemen who readily embraced the idea, and one who said he had tried something of the kind before, and would do it again; but the great body of them are too destitute of personal religion, too indolent, and too little acquainted with the sort of thing, to venture upon it. I think it would be possible to get the Hudson's Bay Compy to establish a Normal Sunday School, either at the Red river, or at York Factory, and to encourage their officers to make themselves acquainted with its management, but it would require the greatest tact and delicacy; for if the great body of them got the idea into their heads that they were to be made schoolmasters of, there would be an end of its usefulness. Moreover in very many instances, perhaps in the majority, unless it were made compulsory on inmates of the Fort to send their children to the school, the influence of the Priest would probably prevent their doing so. It might easily and justly be made compulsory, because all families are maintained by the Company. Again, some of the Traders are Presbyterians, a few are Roman Catholics, many more are young men quite unfit for anything of the sort. Upon all these grounds then, any general measure of that nature seems for the present impracticable. Still I would not give up the idea; and it is but justice to the



traders to say that among the seniors generally, who are mostly men with families and whose seclusion from the world is a safeguard from many forms of worldliness, there is a very good feeling existing. They respect and value religion, however little acquainted some of them may be with it. Since I wrote last Xmas another Ch. of England missionary has been added to the number in the country. His station is the Pas near Cumberland House, on the Saskatchewan, where the mission is maintained by a bequest of £10,000 left by the late Mr. Leith. The existing missionary stations are as follows—[shown opposite]

It would not appear from this table that there is much interference, but there is, because the Romish priests are all itinerant, and having persons of their communion everywhere, have always motives for visiting other stations than that to which they may be more particularly attached. I never heard any difference of opinion as to the entire absence of any good results from their exertions. They follow the track of the Wesleyans, who have hitherto led the way, rebaptize all whom they baptize, (frequently baptize without any previous knowledge of the converts), and deluge the country with trumpery pewter crosses and medals, but scarcely ever appear even to aim at instructing either Indians or halfbreeds in any doctrine of Christianity. The evil effect of the direct and personal rivalry between the Papists and Wesleyans is not confined to the Indians. It is impossible for the Whites to respect either party while they see it. At every post which came in contact with missionized Indians I heard the same astonishing statement, that they are *less* trustworthy and *more* idle than before, which can only be a consequence of the hasty, unsound, and unscriptural methods employed in their conversion. In the case of Romanists, it is difficult to say

|            |                             | Ch of England               | Ch of Rome  | Wesleyan   |
|------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Crees      | Indian village<br>Red river | Mr. Smithurst <sup>45</sup> |   |  |
| Crees<br>& | Red river<br>Settlement     | Mr. Cochrane <sup>46</sup>  | 1 bishop &<br>5 or 6 priests.                     |  |
| Saulteurs  | Manitoba<br>Lake            | Mr. Cowley <sup>47</sup>    | 3 nuns  |  |
| Crees      | The Pas                     | Mr. Hunter <sup>48</sup>    | visited   |  |
| Crees      | Indian village<br>Norway H. | —                           | —   | Mr. Evans<br>(Supr) <sup>51</sup><br>Mr. Mason <sup>52</sup> |
| Crees      | Edmonton                    | —                           | M. Thibeault <sup>49</sup>                        | Mr. Rundle <sup>53</sup>                                     |
| Crees      | Nipigon<br>Lake             | —                           | —   | Mr. Jacobs <sup>54</sup>                                     |
| Crees      | Frog Lake                   | —                           | one   | —  |
| Crees      | Moose Factory               | —                           | —   | one  |
| Saulteurs  | Winnipeg R.                 | —                           | M. Bellcour <sup>50</sup><br>Bp. of<br>Regiopolis | —  |

<sup>45</sup> Cf. supra n.29.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. supra n.21.

<sup>47</sup> Rev. Abraham Cowley, Anglican Missionary came to the Hudson's Bay Company Territories in 1811. He was ordained at Red River in 1844 by Bishop Mountain. In 1857 he became Archdeacon.

<sup>48</sup> Rev. James Hunter (1817-1881), Anglican Missionary in the Hudson's Bay Company Territories, 1844-1864.

<sup>49</sup> Rev. Jean Baptiste Thibault (1810-1879), Roman Catholic Missionary in Hudson's Bay Company Territories, 1833-1872. He was Canadian Government Commissioner during the Riel rising, 1869-1870.

<sup>50</sup> Rev. Georges Belcourt (1803-1874), Roman Catholic Missionary in the North-West, 1832-1858.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. supra n.22.

<sup>52</sup> Rev. William Mason, Wesleyan Methodist Missionary in the North-West, 1840 to 1854. In 1854 he became a member of the Church of England.

<sup>53</sup> Rev. Robert Rundle, Methodist Missionary in the North-West, 1840-1848. He was stationed at Edmonton and Rocky Mountain House.

<sup>54</sup> Rev. Peter Jacobs, native Methodist Missionary licensed to preach in 1838. In 1858 he was expelled from the Methodist Ministry.



that the morals of their converts are worse than before, but all the use they make of the doctrine of absolution is to abuse it. "Let's sin away!" was literally repeated to me as the expression of some of the females at Edmonton, when that convenient loophole was first discovered: they lose their natural conscience and gain nothing better. An Indian goes to a trader in the autumn, takes up goods on credit, spring comes, and he has no furs to produce in payment. "Why didnt you go out and hunt?" said the trader. "I cant pray in the woods!" was the reply of an Indian at Norway H. The Wesleyans whom I saw, are men of, I believe, sincere religion personally. The Superintendent is excessively active; but they are men of little education and deficient in the qualities which make an impression on the Indians. In proof of their theological ignorance, one of them asked me very seriously my opinion as to the propriety of his administering the sacrament to himself *alone*: this same person used to pronounce the Jubilate Deo, *Jubilate* (ate as in late) and he was rather fond of talking of the hymns in the Liturgy by their latin titles; another, if he makes a convert of an Indian having more than one wife, allows him to keep which he pleases, I believe an unwarrantable liberty. But on this point I don't know the law. You will observe that the whole of the missions are confined to the Crees, (in which I include the Maskegons and some other subdenominations,) and the Saulteurs. I believe indeed the latter are hardly included. The body of the Saulteurs, the Slave Indians (Blackfeet &, &) (6 tribes), the Chipewyans (4 tribes), and the great majority of the Crees themselves, are wholly heathen. Christianity indeed is hardly spread at all among the pure Indians. Those included at most of the stations have been long, from other causes, under the

more direct influence of the whites. With the exception of the Chipewyans the whole of those tribes, the Saulteurs more particularly, exhibit a strong repugnance to it. The Chipewyans of Athabasca and Great Slave Lake, and the Beaver Indians (a Chip<sup>n</sup> tribe) on the contrary show a *strong predisposition towards it*. They repeatedly begged for instruction, they listen attentively to anything that is told them, and many of them observe the Sabbath; these tribes also are more calculated for a settled life than the others. Hitherto all that has been done for them is this. The Wesleyan Super<sup>t</sup> in 1847 made a circuit from Edmonton, by Lesser Slave L. and down Peace river, preaching through an interpreter wherever he could get an audience. He made a short stay at some of the Forts and returned by Isle à la Crosse. He engaged at that time to visit them again this last summer, and they were very anxious for the fulfilment of his promise, the Indians from more northern tribes in several instances came down to hear him. However he never went until the month of August last. When hearing that the R.C. priest, M. Thibeault, was talking of doing so, off he started, to get before him, with two or three half-instructed halfbreeds whom he meant to set down in convenient situations to act as preachers. I thus missed seeing him. I believe he intends visiting McKenzie's river before his return.

Mr. Jacobs is a pure Indian (Saulteur) but he could make nothing whatever of his own tribe, and after about 4 years fruitless labour has left them for the more teachable Maskegons on the Nipigon Lake. There is not one missionary in the country who can preach to the Indians in their own language. M. Thibeault is the best Cree scholar among them and speaks it fluently, but does not venture to preach; the others do not speak it fluently. A

great part of the Liturgy has been admirably translated into Cree (the languages into which nothing has been translated (that I am aware of) Blackfoot, Assiniboine, Beaver Indian and pure Chipewyan, independent of several dialects) by a Mr. Harriot,<sup>55</sup> and is used by the Wesleyans; a part also into Maskegon, an impure Cree, by Henry Boud<sup>56</sup> (a pure Indian) the schoolmaster at the Pas, for the use of that station. I should greatly mistrust his competence, although he speaks English perfectly. He was educated at a sort of mission school at the Red River, under the P.G. Society (I believe) or the Ch. Missy<sup>57</sup> and which has turned out some very well instructed and civilized men. I believe but little of the scripture has as yet been translated into Cree, and none printed. Mr. Evans is a clever man, master of the Saulteur, which is radically the same as Cree, and has taken great pains to facilitate the acquirement of both languages, by inventing a Phonetic system of writing them, and so fixing the pronunciation and the orthography, upon which no two people were agreed before. Whether his system is calculated for permanence remains to be shown. Nothing has as yet been translated in Chipewyan, and no white man is sufficiently master of that very difficult language, to undertake anything of the kind. Many of the Chipewyans speak Cree.

With the exception of paying £100 a year to a clergyman who has charge of the school at Red River, and another £100 (I am not quite sure of this) to the parochial

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<sup>55</sup> John Edward Harriott (1797-1866), Chief Factor in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company.

<sup>56</sup> Rev. Henry Budd established the first Anglican Indian Mission in the interior at the Pas in 1842.

<sup>57</sup> Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and the Church Missionary Society.

clergyman, Mr. Cochrane, (I believe he is under the Ch. Miss. Society) the Hudson's Bay Company gives no support to the Church of England, but principally maintains the four Wesleyan missions, and allows £100 a year to the R.C. mission at Red River, and the same sum to the R.C. mission on the Columbia. Each of the Wesleyans is lodged and boarded (his family included) at the Company's expense at the Fort to which his mission is attached, on precisely the same terms as the commissioned traders, and they travel at the Company's expense. Thus the real assistance given by the Comp. is very considerable: but it would tend to relieve the missionaries of some difficulties if they were altogether independent of the Company. The Wesleyans are not very popular, chiefly owing to a very conscientious, but I think injudicious opposition they have offered to some of the practices of the country, especially that of travelling on the Sunday. This question is too long to go into. I think them wrong. The Bishop of Quebec when he visited the Red river this summer travelled on Sundays.<sup>58</sup> I have little doubt that had the Church of England anticipated the Wesleyans 5 or 6 years ago (it is only since 1840 that the present system has been organized) they would never have entered the country; but being there, I do not see how they could be turned out, and do not think that the Company is likely to extend materially their assistance to these objects. There are several situations in which Church missions might be established without any interference with others, and where they would supercede the hasty, irregular, and opposing visits of the R.C.'s & Weslms. For example, Isle à la Crosse (Chipewyans & Crees), Peace river (d°) and Mackenzie's

<sup>58</sup> Rt. Rev. George Jehosaphat Mountain (1789-1863), third Anglican Bishop of Quebec (1837-1863), visited Red River in 1844.

river. To support each mission a sum of about £300 a year would suffice. I imagine the mission (Ch of England) at the Pas, will derive about that income from Mr. Leith's<sup>59</sup> £10,000 (the R.C. missions dont cost a third of it).

It should be earnestly remembered that besides the blessings of the Gospel, Christianity is the only remedy for the rapid decline of the northern Indians, and the terrible distresses they sometimes endure. About 300 lives have been lost from starvation on McKenzie's river during the past 5 years, out of a population not exceeding 4000; and the larger animals throughout the country are becoming so much scarcer that it appears evident that some organic change must take place in the social circumstances of the natives, some fresh resources to be opened to them, and new habits taught them if they are to exist. It seems almost providential that the agricultural capabilities of the country are becoming better understood at the same time. There are great practical difficulties in the way of settling the Indians, into which I need not go. There is nothing that Time, Faith, and perseverance cannot overcome. What is wanted is first the means of establishing one or more new missions, then *fit* men for missionaries. The Indians are much influenced by personal qualities. I could write another sheet or two on the subject, but think you will have had enough of it. I hope you will be able to interest some friends in this cause.

Believe me my dear Sophia,

Ever your affectionate Brother

J. H. Lefroy

<sup>59</sup> James Leith (1777-1838), fur-trader in North West Company and later the Hudson's Bay Company. By his will he left half of his estate to Protestant missions for the Indians.

(C)

Toronto. 17 December 1844.

My dear Anthony,

As the shortest way of ~~expediting~~ a commission which I wish you to execute for ~~my friend~~ John Harvey, I enclose his letter. The books in question are not to be procured in Canada. Will you send me out at the same time a copy of the *Xtian Year* for Mrs. H.<sup>60</sup> I gave her some time ago Geo. Herbert's<sup>61</sup> poems, and the other day she gave them back, in exchange for Keble. It must be an English edition, as the American editions are not admissible in England. I think however I shall try to bring one; you will like to see it. So little is that book known in Canada, that neither at Toronto nor Kingston could I get even an American edition. If you will pay for these I will let Harvey know his debt, and repay you for both of us.

I have several letters to thank you for, (*none to thank Anna for*) and write in such haste that I hardly know upon which subject to commence. I think it must be upon little Mary, whom I long to see. I have some diminutive Indian moccasins made expressly for her. Every one represents her as such a delightful child that I am curious to discover by what charm she wins their hearts. I should like to see your new house, of which many have talked but no one has given me a line of description, nor can I form any other idea of it than that it is all south front, which I don't understand. However, I have let out above the secret of my probable visit to England in the Summer, and may await a solution of these difficulties until then. I never

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<sup>60</sup> *The Christian Year* by John Keble, English poet and divine (1792-1866).

<sup>61</sup> George Herbert (1593-1633), English poet, whose piety and devotional fervour found much favour among his seriously-minded contemporaries.

had much faith in a visit to England, immediately after my return from the North, and therefore said nothing about it in any of my letters home. So that had it not been for this unexpected meeting with Mr. Lewis,<sup>62</sup> they would not have had a false expectation raised; but I hope to get away in May, when all the work which immediately presses will have been disposed of, and when I shall have the advantage of being present at a meeting of all the great men in magnetism, including Gauss, Arago, and many more. A summer visit too will be much pleasanter.

I find Toronto much altered since I left it. It is a wonderfully growing place, and will probably hereafter be the leading commercial city of Western Canada, a sort of Fresh-water Boston. I have had little intercourse as yet with Mr. Grassett. They have built two new churches in the City, one of them very near us, but at present the Church party is under great anxiety owing to two causes. One is a disagreement between the colonial and the home government about the appropriation of the Clergy reserves, in consequence of which some of the clergy can get no payment whatever, and the Bishop<sup>63</sup> has just been obliged to appeal to the people to come forward for their relief. A sermon is to be preached all over the Diocese on the 12<sup>th</sup> Jan<sup>y</sup>. It is said that four of the clergy are actually in extreme want, and as vacancies occur he dare not appoint men to them when it is entirely uncertain how they will be paid. The other danger is from a threatened invasion of the charter of Upper Canada University. It is one of the things to which early attention was directed in

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. supra n.34.

<sup>63</sup> Rt. Rev. John Strachan (1778-1867), member of the Executive Council of Upper Canada, 1818-1827, and first Anglican Bishop of Toronto, 1839-1867.

the speech from the throne (i.e. Governor-General's)<sup>64</sup> and although the governing party at present is ostensibly Tory, yet they are Tories so liberalized that they hardly know themselves, and the Governor-General's policy is essentially liberal. The measure dreaded is the abolition of all tests and destinations, for which the Dissenters in the Province have long been clamouring. It was conceded by the university 12 years ago (in 1832) that subscription to the 39 Arts required of members of Council, should be changed into a general declaration of being members of the Ch. of Eng. or if the Government insisted upon it, should be done away with altogether, and that the qualification for Divinity degrees, instead of being the same as at Oxford, should be left to the arrangement of the College council. The present Bishop (then Archdeacon Strachan) was one of those who made this concession, and I believe it is the great occasion of their present embarrassment. It has suspended the erection of the College. I imagine the two parties will split their differences; the Church will retain a leading control, but without the power of requiring subscription to the Articles on the part of professors or students. The conservative majority is small, about 45 to 39, in the House of Assembly, and made up of men of very different shades of opinion, united only in a determination to support the G.G. support<sup>s</sup> him too in the very measure, Responsible government, to which the majority were desperately opposed, only 2 years ago. A measure more fatal than first admitting men of all denominations to the council and then allowing that council to settle the standard of Divinity degrees, could hardly have been de-

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<sup>64</sup> Sir Charles T. Metcalfe (1785-1846), Governor-General of Canada, 1843-1845.



vised. However I think that if the worst happens, and the Churchmen do their duty and don't give up the struggle in disgust, a great preponderance of church principle may be hoped. The Professor of Divinity Dr. Beaven, is a High Churchman; so is the Bishop—so is (I rather imagine) Dr. McCaul the Principal—and several of the other dons are Churchmen. Whatever they do to the charter, I hardly see how they can unship men legally appointed already to these offices.

Who have I to thank for *Grant's Lectures*? I suppose you. I have been reading them with great interest. I failed while in the North in getting a document which would be very interesting in illustration of one of his remarks—that of the want of authorized church services for new converts, and of the unfitness of our Liturgy as it stands for the use of men in the infancy of Christianity and civilization, and whose language does not contain terms to convey many of its ideas. I wanted to get a literal retranslation of the Cree *Te Deum*. The translation is by the most perfect master of that language in the North, a Mr. Harriot, and is no doubt the very best that could be made. I am going to write to him on the subject, for when we met we were both too busy to attend to it. It will be curious to know how much he has wholly omitted, and what substitutions he has made in other places. The Wesleyan, whom I used to hear reading it, did not himself understand it sufficiently to explain it to me, in fact, repeated it by rote. I shall write in May, if you think of anything to enquire let me know. I am writing a longer and more connected statement of the missions and progress of Xtianity to Sophia, who tells me she has been copying the different

expressions in my letters for some one who was interested in the matter.

Give my love to Anna and to Mary and believe me your affect<sup>te</sup> Brother

J. H. Lefroy

(D)

Toronto. 18<sup>th</sup> Jan<sup>y</sup> 1845

My dear Isabella,

I have been so busy that the Halifax mail has departed without a single letter of mine, and my only chance of letting you know of my existence, in spite of the hardships of society, the tyranny of civilization, and the acts of Polly Hagerman,<sup>65</sup> is to write by Boston. It seems an age since I came back. If it were not for some tokens of the past hung up about the house, and for the kind enquiries on the coldest days whether I don't feel it painfully warm, I should almost forget having been away at all; especially since no letters from home have reached me since the news of my return was received, and those that were written before it, are very short and economical as if you were determined not to throw away a bit of news until you were morally certain of my being here to receive it. First of all, since I have mentioned her name, and for fear you should ask Riddell, I must tell you who Polly Hagerman is. She is the daughter of Judge Hagerman, and sings, her eyes are blue.

I wish you could see the trophy we have set up in what we magnificently term the lobby of our mansion, Snowshoes, two or three daggers in Indian-worked cases, my

<sup>65</sup> Daughter of Christopher A. Hagerman (1792-1847), Family Compact leader in the Assembly of Upper Canada, 1819-1840, and judge of the Court of King's Bench, 1840-1847.

gun, ditto, Calumets, a Head dress of Grisley bears claws, and other things, the admiration of all beholders. I have got some things, not many, for you. Curiosities are not nearly so easily procured by one who travels hastily, as you would suppose — if made at all it is usually by the daughters of the traders, from whom we cannot buy them, and one does not like to ask them; and in my case almost every moment that I passed at the different forts was occupied, so that I have little time or opportunity to get them by indirect means. Mr. and Mrs. Lewis gave me several things. But if I return to the North I shall know better how to go to work, and expect to make a great collection. I have forgotten to mention that I should be much obliged to you if you will do a piece of work for me. A Halfbreed lady on Peace River, wife of the trader at Dunvegan, Mr. Bouchier, is doing me an elaborate piece of quill work, and I should much like to send her some nice specimen of English work in return. What it should be I cannot say. She is—not to speak it profanely,—much such a person as Betty, rather less refined, and elegant work would be about as much in keeping with her apartment and herself as with Betty and the kitchen; still she would admire it, and like the attention, as would her husband, who is a very gentlemanly person. I leave it entirely to you, by which means I have no responsibility; and really it does not matter what it is, a little embroidery in gold thread would be thought magnificent, only, mind, whatever you have to get, you get for me, it must not cost you anything but labour, and taste, and I should like to get it by Mr. Lewis, in order to send it in this summer.

I have obeyed, my dear Bobbie, your injunctions to go into society, not in the least because I require it to relax my gravity, but because it was pleasant for a change after

such a long absence from it. After all, society is dull enough, were it not for Polly Hagerman's singing, I should consider evenings spent abroad a great infliction. There is so little that deserves the name of conversation, so much egregious trifling, so much which makes me ashamed of my folly if I join in it, that I seldom leave a party without some secret self-reproach. Upon one score or the other, I am getting towards that state of philosophy, that the only society I care for is that of a rational family circle. However, to do justice to my Toronto friends, out of all the parties that I go to, there are quite a large proportion of really pleasant ones, meaning small and rational ones, as one can ever expect to enjoy. I stand out against dances, (How can you dance the polka? I consider it highly improper, mind that.) and people are good-natured enough not to ask me upon those occasions. The great defect in the lady society of Toronto, especially the young lady branch of it, is the want of character. There are very few who possess any one distinguishing taste, acquirement, or characteristic. One cannot be surprized at this considering the deficiencies of the colony in subjects and schools of taste, but it reduces conversation to trifles and matters of the moment. Apropos to society, I promised Miss Robinson, the Chief Justice's d. to try and get her a sketch of a place called Purley near Reading. Does any one in the family know it? Emily Robinson is one for whom I have a sort of liking, simply because she does possess a character, although one which in itself I don't admire, being highly worldly—but she is a clever girl, and maintains her own opinions—moreover rather pretty. I have the consolation of feeling perfectly safe with her—for she has an avowed resolution never to marry a poor man: they say when some one proposed to her, her first

enquiry was "What's your income?"<sup>66</sup> I am almost ashamed of writing this gossip—but what can I write about.

I have just taken the serious step of buying a horse. I call him Moose, and think him a good one, looks well in the sleigh, and has the felicity of drawing Younghusband and his intended, whenever he can beg or borrow another. You dont know what a pretty thing a sleigh is, and at this moment the sleighing is remarkably good. We have had a very mild winter, the Therm<sup>r</sup> has only once been at zero, no snow fell until about a week ago. Will you tell Anthony that unless he has already got the Keble for me, I will not trouble him, I have got one here, but if he sends it, I shall find some one else to present it to. I was dutiful enough to buy the Winter's tale the other day. I like it, better than Bertram's dream—the latter however has the very great merit in a tale, of entrapping one into the moral, presenting it unexpectedly. I beg you to apply it—let conscience ask "are you going to write to Henry?" I am very anxious to hear of Maxwell's safe arrival, and his plans. My own proposal still is, to come home in May or June. Give my love to all the family, and believe me dear Bobbie, your aff<sup>te</sup> Br

J. H. Lefroy

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<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, he found her attractive enough to marry! Lefroy married Miss Emily Robinson in Toronto, April 16, 1846.

## APPENDIX

### CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO THE MAGNETIC SURVEY OF THE NORTH-WEST

In the Preface to his *Diary of a Magnetic Survey of a portion of the Dominion of Canada chiefly in the North-Western Territories*, published in 1883, Lefroy (then General Sir J. H. Lefroy, C.B., K.C.M.G.) included a number of letters and minutes of the Council of the Royal Society showing the manner in which his survey of the North-West originated, and what were the views of its principal advocate, General Sir Edward Sabine. Owing to the fact that Lefroy's *Diary etc.*, is not readily available to historians, these minutes and letters are reproduced below.

#### *Minute of the Committee of Physics of the Royal Society, January 7, 1841*

Letters were read from Major Sabine to Sir John Herschel, Chairman of the Committee of Physics, on the subject of a Magnetic Survey of the British possessions in North America, and also letters on the same subject from Sir John Herschel, Dr. Peacock, Sir Hew Ross, Deputy Adjutant-General of the Royal Artillery, and Lieut. Riddell, R.A., Director of the Magnetic Observatory at Toronto, in Canada.

Resolved,—That these letters be laid before the Council, with a strong recommendation from this Committee, that the President and Council will take the proper steps to recommend to the Government the execution of the proposed survey.

*Letters*

London, November 25, 1840.

My Dear Sir, — It is quite unnecessary that I should make any preliminary remarks on the importance of a Magnetic Survey of the British possessions in North America to *you*, who have yourself, in the "Quarterly Review," placed in so clear a light the value of such surveys in general, and of the one in question in particular; nor need I dwell on the advantages of making the survey whilst there is a magnetic observatory in Canada, to serve as a primary station for reference and comparison.

The object of my present letter is to propose a definite plan for its performance, which I address to you, as Chairman of the Committee of Physics of the Royal Society, in which the details might be beneficially discussed, and from whence its recommendation might with propriety emanate.

1. The strength of the Canadian observatory to be increased by one officer and one non-commissioned officer for three years; and an addition to be made to the instruments of

One inclination instrument with two dipping and two intensity needles.

One transportable magnetometer with unifilar and bifilar suspensions.

One sextant and artificial horizon.

Two portable stands.

2. I have ascertained by personal communication with the Chairman of the Hudson's Bay Company, that for a public undertaking of this nature, the Company is ready to furnish gratuitous canoe conveyance in the territories belonging to them; and from inquiries that I have made I have reason to believe that two summers thus occupied would supply ample materials for the countries north of the Canadian provinces, within limits of convenient access. For excursions within the Canadian provinces, and for other small contingent expenses, I consider that £50 a year for each of the three years would be sufficient, which should be payable in the same manner as the

observatory contingent allowance, on the certificate of the Director of the Observatory.

3. Lieut. Younghusband, of the Royal Artillery, has been acting for some months, with the permission of the Master-General of the Ordnance, as a gratuitous assistant to Lieut. Riddell at the Toronto Observatory, with a view of qualifying himself for this undertaking. The zeal he has evidenced, and the very favourable manner in which Lieut. Riddell speaks of him in all respects, show him to be a highly eligible person, and his presence on the spot is an advantage in saving the expense of a passage to Canada.

4. The whole expenditure contemplated for this undertaking would be nearly as follows:—

|   |      |                  |             |
|---|------|------------------|-------------|
| For instruments .....                         | £130 |                  |             |
| One officer's extra pay, annual               | 183  | For 3 years      | £549        |
| One non-commissioned officer's extra pay..... | 27   | " "              | 81          |
| Contingent .....                              | 50   | " "              | 150         |
|   |      |                  | <u>780</u>  |
|   |      | Instruments .... | 130         |
|   |      | Total ....       | <u>£910</u> |

Total £910 in three years, or in round numbers £300 a year for three years.

Believe me, &c.  
Edward Sabine.

Sir John Herschel, Bart.

Collingwood, November 27, 1840.

Dear Sir, — As regards the proposition in your letter, as you have therein connected my name with my opinions as stated in the "Quarterly Review" (to which I do not in the least object, as it was never my desire or wish to regard that article as anonymous, and as there is now an obvious reason for avowing it), in which I have distinctly advocated the very point in question, and supported it by arguments to which I can add nothing either in the way of novelty or force, but



mere reiteration, I could not, in fact, by my personal attendance do more than I have already done. Only I may add, that I have as yet seen no ground to weaken that opinion, but that on the contrary, the more I reflect on the desirableness of procuring Magnetic Surveys of the Colonies, the more apparent it seems.

The programme of the operation as regards the personal and material, as stated in your proposal, appears perfectly calculated to meet the requisites of the case, and I have no hesitation in conveying through you to the Committee my own entire approbation and concurrence in its coming before the Council, recommended by them as a proper object for application to Government. In the recommendation of such objects for public support, the Royal Society is only performing its duty to the country and to science. It is for the Government to decide what portion of the national resources can be afforded for scientific purposes. All that we have to look to is that the objects we do recommend be really great and worthy ones, and that the means we propose be well adapted to the end.

Believe me, &c.

J. F. W. Herschel.

Major Sabine

Woolwich, November 26, 1840.

My Dear Sabine, — I do not see the least objection to the employment of Lieut. Younghusband and a non-commissioned officer of the Artillery to assist in carrying out the Magnetic Survey in British North America, should your proposal receive the sanction of the Master-General. Lieut. Younghusband is a very promising officer, and I shall be very glad if he is permitted to continue on the service on which he is now employed.

Believe me, &c.

Hew Ross.

Major Sabine, &c.

Toronto, November 25, 1840.

I write a few lines to thank you for your proposals as to the survey of this part of the world. They embrace, I think, all that can be wished for, or required from the Government, i.e.—

1. Lieut. Younghusband and an additional gunner to be attached to the observatory for three years.
2. Instruments to be furnished, value £130.
3. £50 a year for three years on contingent account for travelling expenses.
4. An arrangement to be made with the Hudson's Bay Company to convey an officer and assistant on two summer trips, or three if necessary.

C. J. B. Riddell.

*Minute of Council of the Royal Society*

Jan. 7, 1841. — Resolved, — That the recommendation of the Committee of Physics contained in this resolution be adopted, and that the President be requested to confer with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Master-General of the Ordnance on the subject.

In the same Preface Lefroy pointed out that in making the offer of "gratuitous canoe conveyance" the Hudson's Bay Company had no intention of saddling itself with heavy expense. According to Lefroy the understanding arrived at by the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company and Edward Sabine, "the one knowing little of the requirements of a scientific traveller and the other even less of the peculiar system of the Company's internal communications", led to a misunderstanding which appeared in the letter of instructions in which Sir George Simpson directed that accounts be opened and expenses

charged to the Royal Society. The Council of the Society had not anticipated or provided for any such charges, and when, two years later, a bill amounting to £1,277 was presented, the Society was reluctant to pay it. The justice of the claim was ultimately admitted, and a Treasury grant was made which satisfied the Company.

*Letter from Mr. Trevelyan, addressed to the President of the Royal Society*

Treasury Chambers, November 13, 1847.

My Lord,—The Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury having had before them the memorial and documents enclosed in your Lordship's letter of the 30th ultimo, relating to the charges of the Hudson's Bay Company in regard to the Magnetic Survey in North America:

I am commanded to state to your Lordship that My Lords regret the misunderstanding which has occurred in regard to the expense of this expedition.

In the paper transmitted with your Lordship's letter of the 10th January, 1841, it was distinctly stated that the whole expenditure contemplated for the undertaking was £910, and that gratuitous canoe conveyance would be provided by the Hudson's Bay Company in the territories belonging to them.

Upon this statement the consent of this Board was given to the proposed expenditure, and My Lords were by no means prepared for the present demand upon the public purse, amounting to a further sum of £1,277 3s. 5d.

It appears, however, that the greater part of this expense has been occasioned by a departure from the original plan of the expedition, and that the extension of the survey has been of considerable value and importance in a national point of view, and it might be reasonably expected that the Government should reimburse to the Hudson's Bay Company the expenses incurred by them beyond the amount originally contemplated. There is some difficulty in ascertaining the exact amount of

the extra expense incurred, but it would appear from Capt. Lefroy's statement that it cannot have amounted to the whole sum mentioned, viz. £1,277 3s. 5d.

Upon fully considering the whole of the correspondence, My Lords are of opinion that £850 will reimburse to the Company all the expenses on account of which they may have a claim upon the public, and My Lords will in the ensuing Session submit an estimate to Parliament for this amount.

In addition to this sum of £850 there is a charge for clothing, &c. supplied to Captain Lefroy, which that gentleman will repay to the Company through his agents, making the whole amount to be replaced to the funds of the Hudson's Bay Company on this account £885 5s.

I have the honour to be, &c.

C. N. Trevelyan.

The President of the Royal Society,  
Somerset House.

### *Circular Letter of Instructions*

Lachine, near Montreal, April 26, 1843.

*To the Gentlemen in charge of Districts and Posts in the  
service of The Hon. Hudson's Bay Company*

Gentlemen, — This will be handed to you by J. H. Lefroy, Esq., of the Royal Artillery, who, under the direction of Her Majesty's Government and of the Royal Society, proceeds to the interior for the purpose of making Magnetical Observations; and I have to beg that every facility and assistance he may require, and which the circumstances of the country and service may admit, be afforded him towards the accomplishment of the important and interesting object of his mission.

Mr. Lefroy takes his passage, accompanied by a servant, by the brigade for the Northern department, to start in the course of a few days hence, and Mr. J. McLean, the gentleman in charge of that brigade, is hereby instructed to afford *two*

hours a day for Magnetical Observations; four hours at each post, and twenty-four hours commencing from midday on the 26th May and 21st June.

Should Mr. Lefroy require the assistance of any of the Company's servants for the purpose of conveying him from post to post, or on any other duty connected with his mission, they are to be placed at his disposal, with such craft and appointments as may be necessary; and his demands in clothing and other supplies may be complied with, for which receipts are to be taken from him at each post, and an account opened with the Royal Society, to which will be charged the wages of such servants and the prices of craft, appointments, clothing, &c., &c.

It is to be understood that Mr. Lefroy is to be at liberty to proceed to any part of the country he may desire, and to make such stay at the different posts as he may determine upon; and strongly recommending that gentleman to your kindest personal civilities and attention,

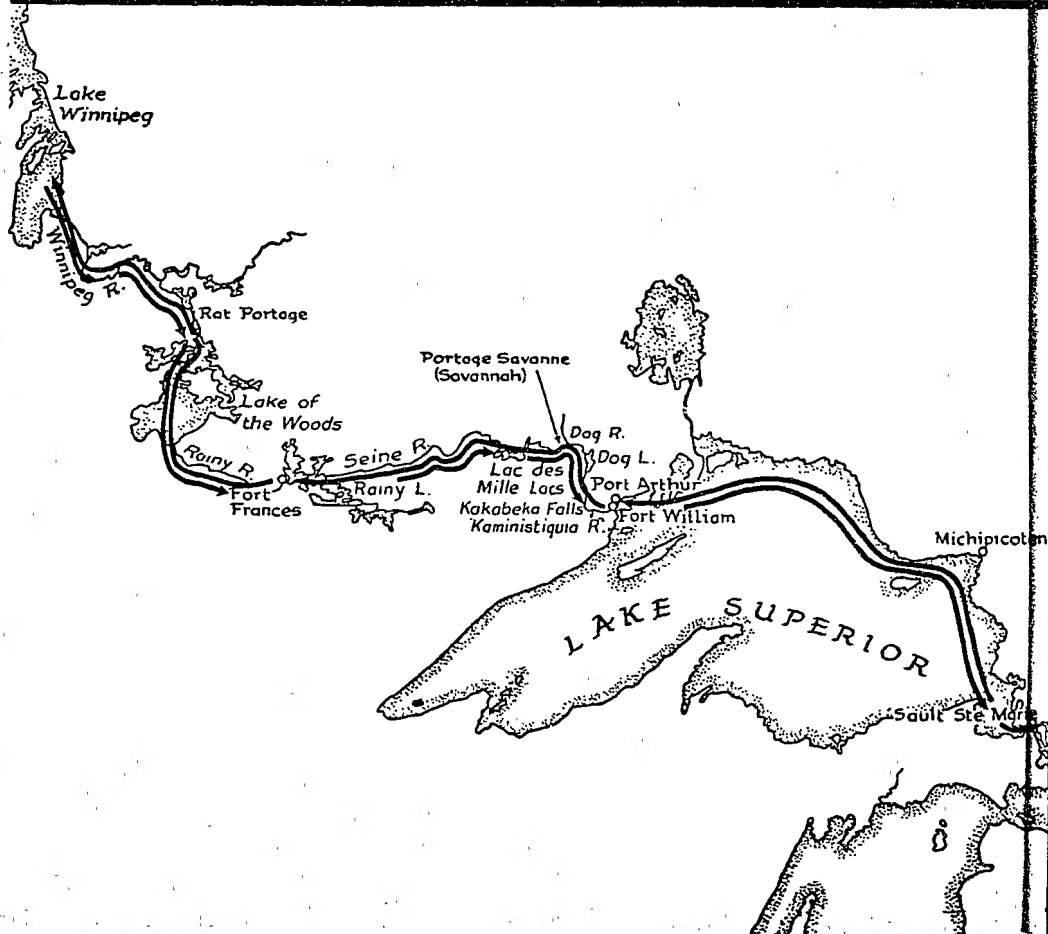
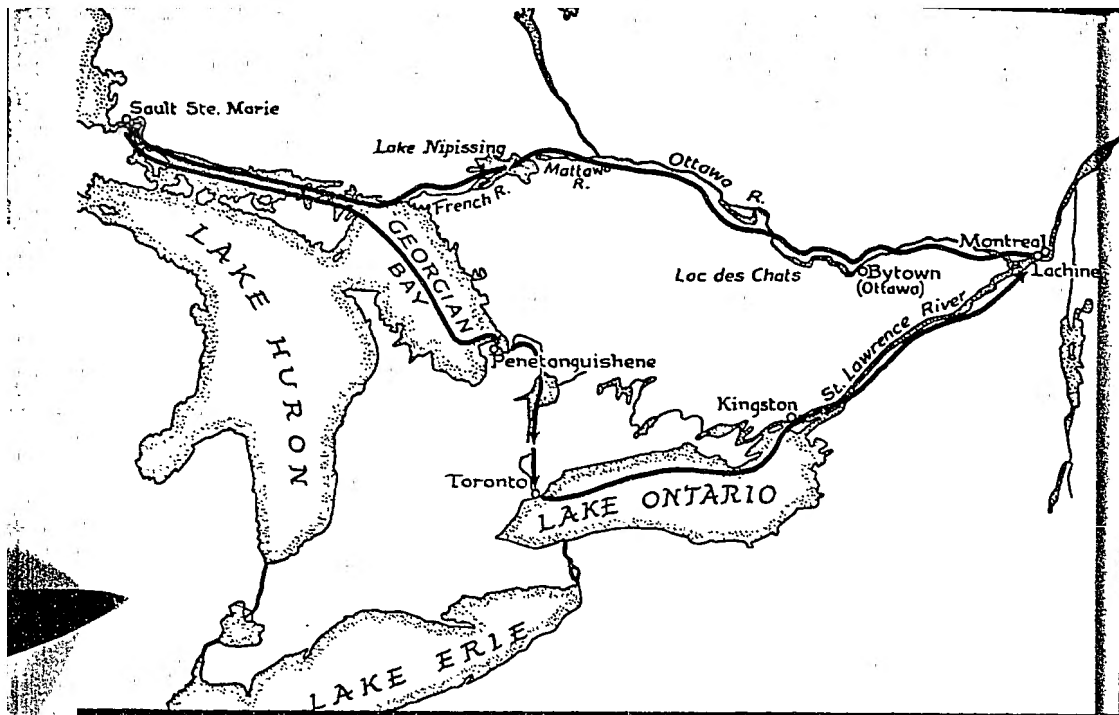
I remain, &c.

(Signed) Geo. Simpson.

In one respect there was no misunderstanding. In the Preface to his *Diary* Lefroy wrote

The kindness of the personal civilities and attentions I received during a stay of eighteen months in the interior did the fullest justice to Sir George Simpson's introduction, and left an impression which lapse of time has not effaced. I was so fortunate as to find at Fort Chipewyan the remains of a library formed by officers of the then extinct North-west Company for their Northern department, comprising many sound books of history and general literature. In the genial society of the late Mr. Colin Campbell, and with the company of a young Canadian clerk, Mr. Dyke Bouchier, I passed a winter there in much comfort, fully employed, and greatly interested in the daily novelties of the fur-trader's mode of life. And here I must say a word on the sterling qualities of my assistant,

Corporal William Henry, R.A., then a young soldier, who lived to reach the rank of Colonel on retirement from the army, and who shared the fatigue of daily and nightly observation with a zeal, a cheerfulness, and a strict discharge of duty, which were all that I could wish. Of like quality were the artillery soldiers who accompanied Sir George Back a few years previously, and of like quality, I doubt not, will be found those who at this moment are assisting Captain Dawson, R.A., in a very similar duty at Fort Rae. The ranks of the army can at all times furnish men fit for special services of this nature, and their employment is much to be encouraged, as maintaining the diversified experience, the high standard of intelligence, and the activity of mind, which now enter more than ever into military efficiency.



# HENRY LEFROY'S JOURNEY FROM MONTREAL TO FORT GOOD HOPE 1843-1844

